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TALES FROM THE KATHA-SARITSAGARA

THE CHOSEN BRIDEGROOM



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THE CHOSEN BRIDEGROOM

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Myriad streams of myth and mystery flow in to create this fanciful and fascinating ocean – tales of wondrous maidens and their fearless lovers, of kings and cities, of statecraft and intrigue, of magic and spells, of treachery and trickery, of ghosts and goblins.

"The chosen bridegroom" and "The Gods as witnesses" in this volume are based on stories from Somadeva's Kathasaritasagara.

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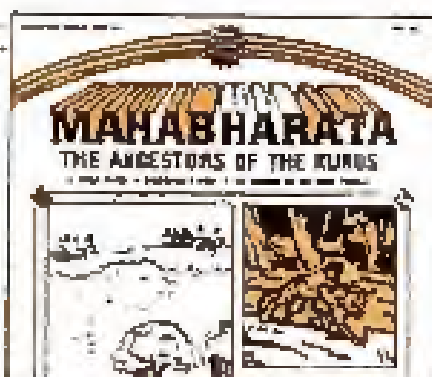
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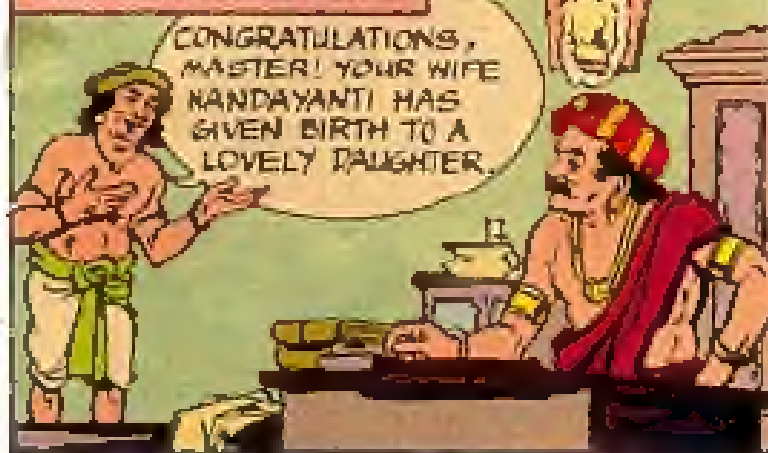
THE CHOSEN BRIDEGROOM

THERE RULED IN THE CITY OF AYODHYA, KING VIRAJETU. PEOPLE FELT HAPPY AND SAFE IN HIS CARE.



THE LEADING MERCHANT OF THE CITY WAS RATNADATTA. ONE DAY—

CONGRATULATIONS, MASTER! YOUR WIFE NANDAYANTI HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A LOVELY DAUGHTER.



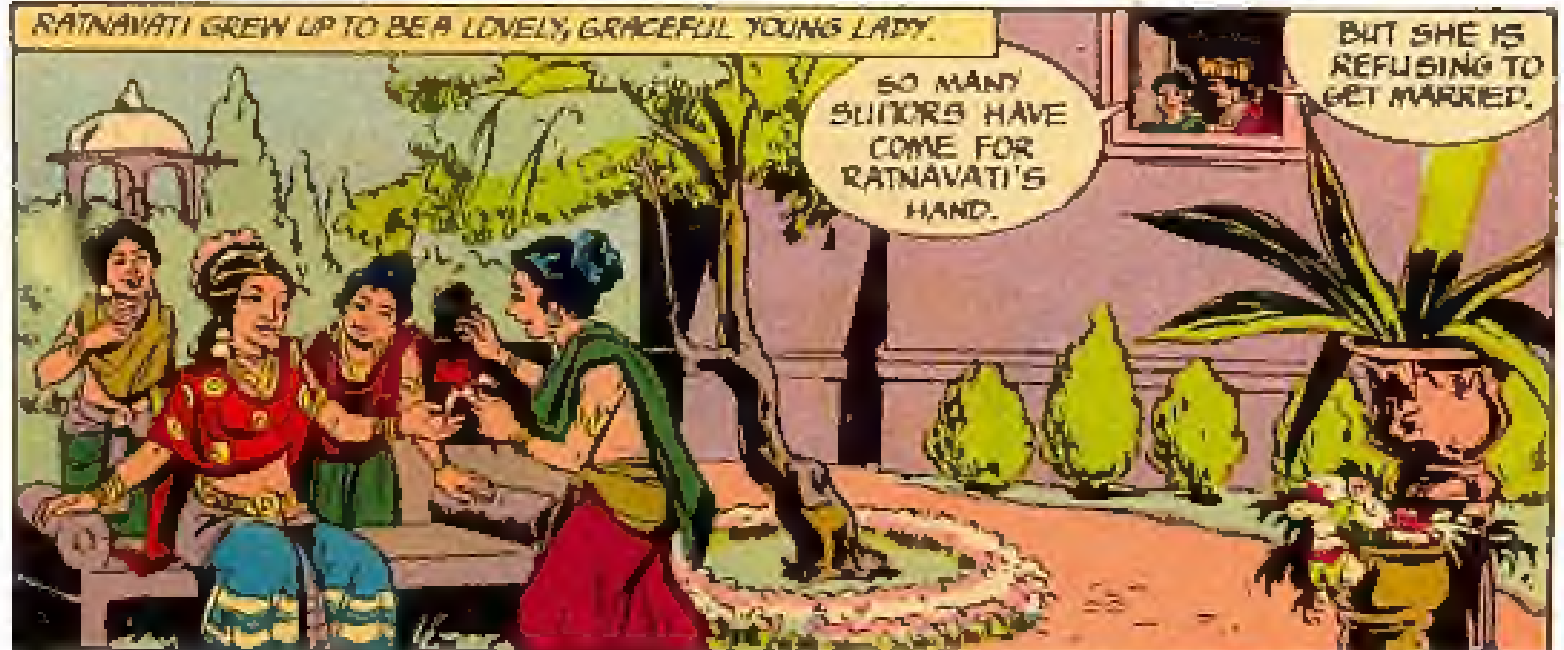
WHAT A GEM! WE'LL CALL HER RATNAVATI.

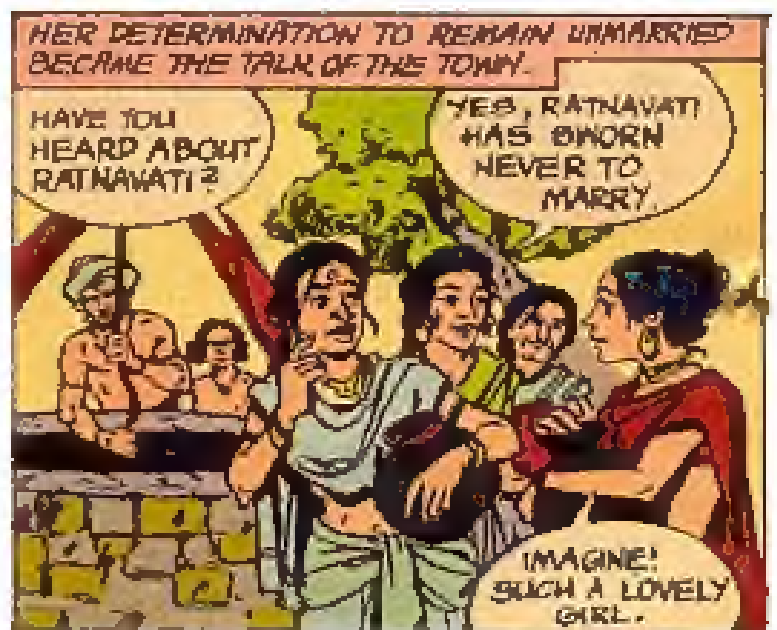


RATNAVATI GREW UP TO BE A LOVELY, GRACEFUL YOUNG LADY.

SO MANY SUITORS HAVE COME FOR RATNAVATI'S HAND.

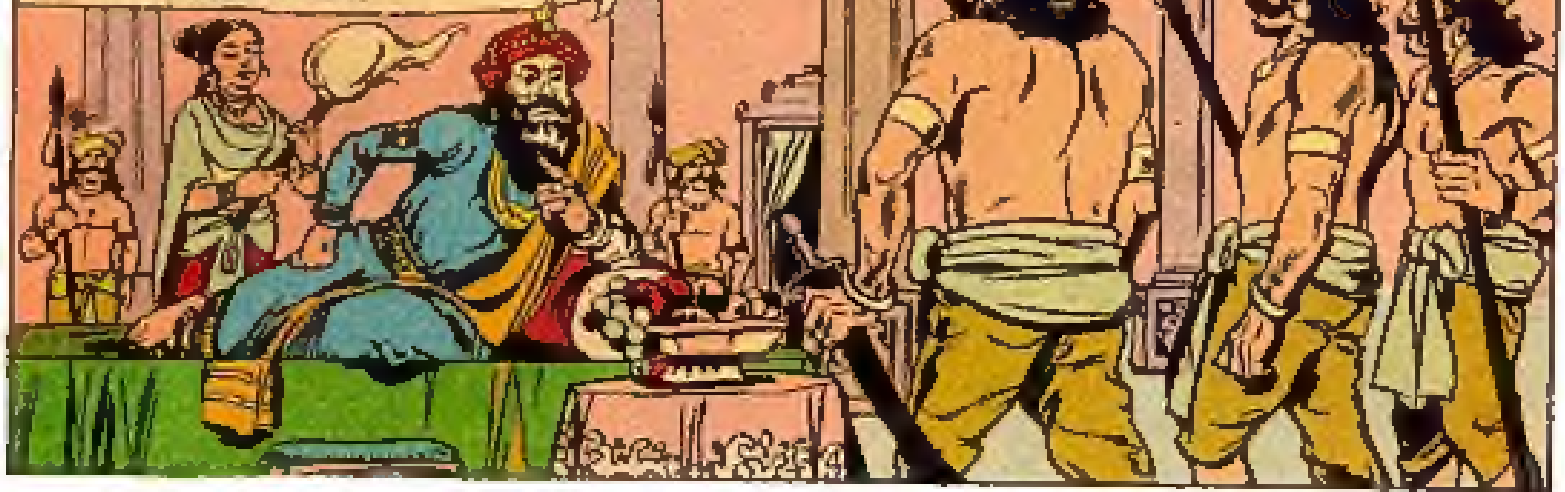
BUT SHE IS REFUSING TO GET MARRIED.





VIRAKETU CALLED HIS SOLDIERS.

POST MORE SENTRYS FOR THE NIGHT WATCH. ALL ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES TO THE TOWN MUST BE ENTERED IN A REGISTER.



THE THIEVES ARE VERY CUNNING, YOUR MAJESTY. THEY WEAR SPECIAL SHOES WHICH MAKE REVERSE FOOTPRINTS.

WELL, LET'S TRAIN OUR MEN TO TRACK THEM.



YOU MUST CATCH THEM, DEAD OR ALIVE.



DESPITE ALL THE EFFORTS OF THE SOLDIERS THE ROBBERIES CONTINUED.

THE THIEVING AND LOOTING HASN'T STOPPED

MY SOLDIERS ARE DOING THEIR BEST. WE HAVE HIRED SPECIAL WATCHMEN, INCREASED THE NIGHT PATROL AND YET...



THE KING THOUGHT FOR A WHILE.

TONIGHT I WILL USE A NEW PLAN. GOD WILLING, I WILL SOON REMOVE ALL YOUR ANXIETY.

THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.



AT NIGHT THE KING WAS BUSY IN HIS PRIVATE CHAMBER.

THERE! I'VE DARKENED MY FACE WITH PAINT. NOW I'LL TIE MY BEARD UP.



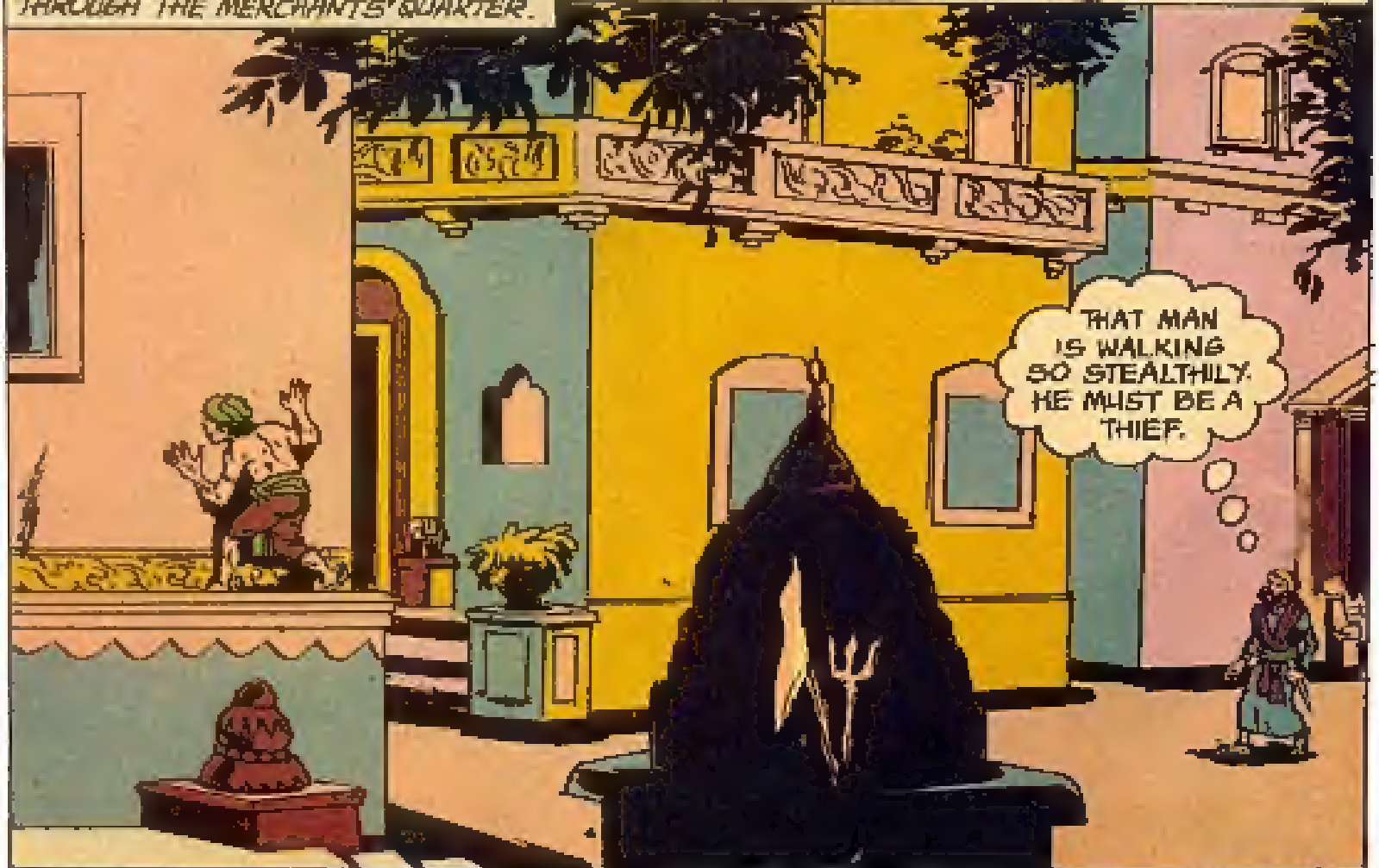
WITH THIS LONG HAIR FROM MY HORSE'S TAIL I'LL TIE UP MY NOSE. HMM. IT LOOKS DIFFERENT NOW.



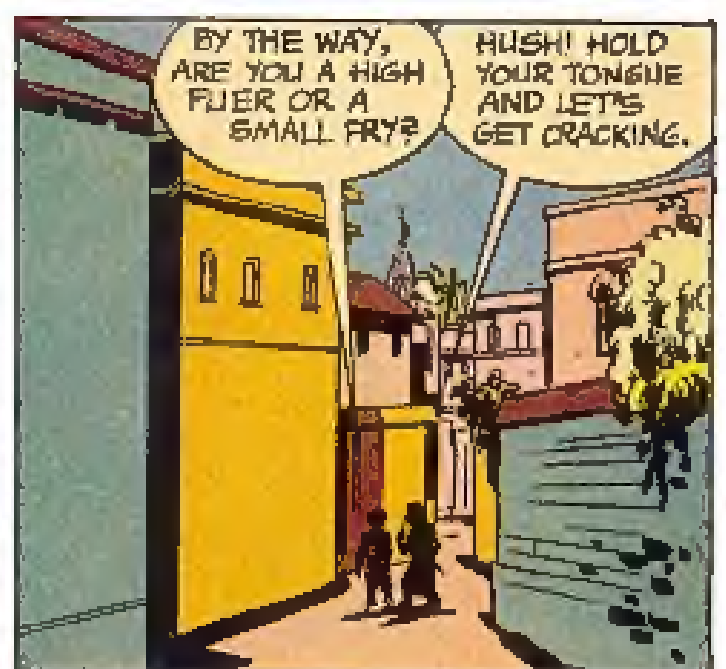
REPLACING HIS SILKEN ROYAL ROBE WITH A ROUGH CLOAK HE STEPPED OUT IN THE DARK.



FOR AN HOUR OR TWO, THE KING WALKED THROUGH THE DARK SILENT STREETS, AS HE PASSED THROUGH THE MERCHANTS' QUARTER.

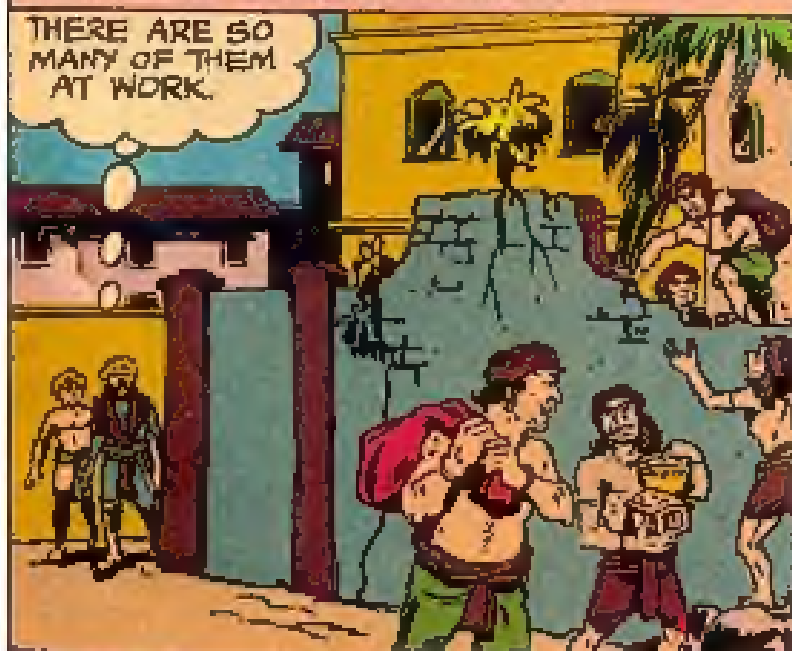


THE MAN SPRANG UP WITH A CRY WHEN THE KING TAPPED HIS SHOULDER.



SOON THE EXPERT THIEF LED THE KING TO THE RIGHT SPOTS IN THE BACK STREETS.

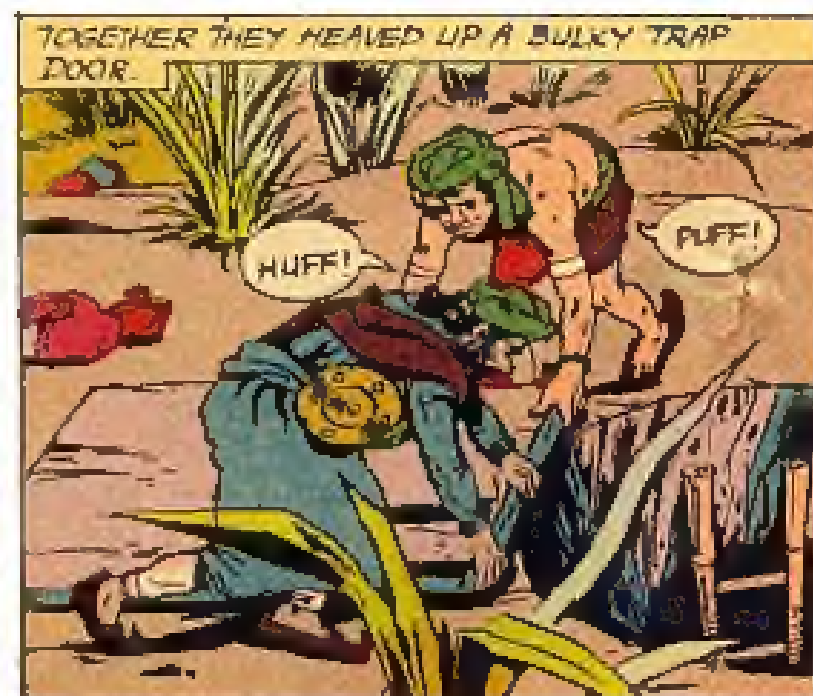
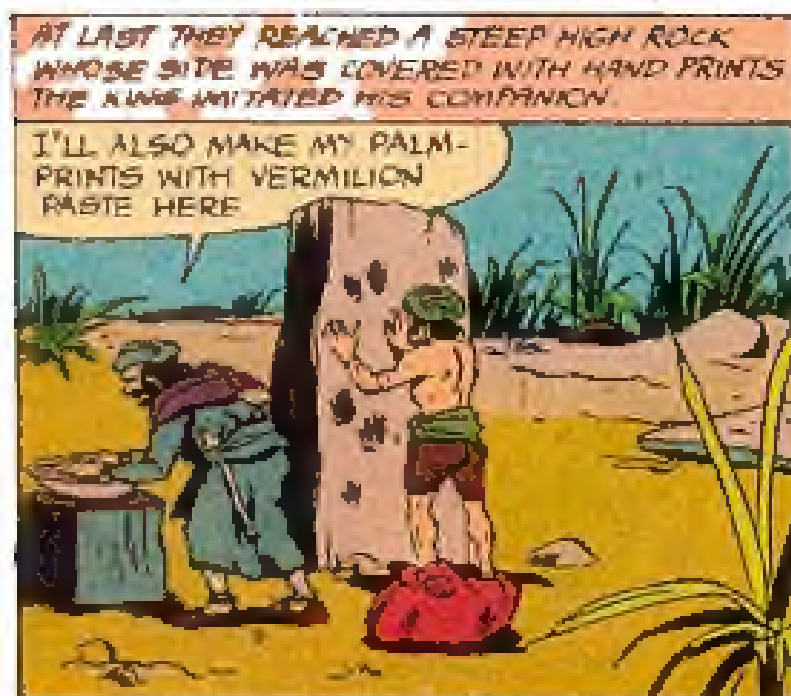
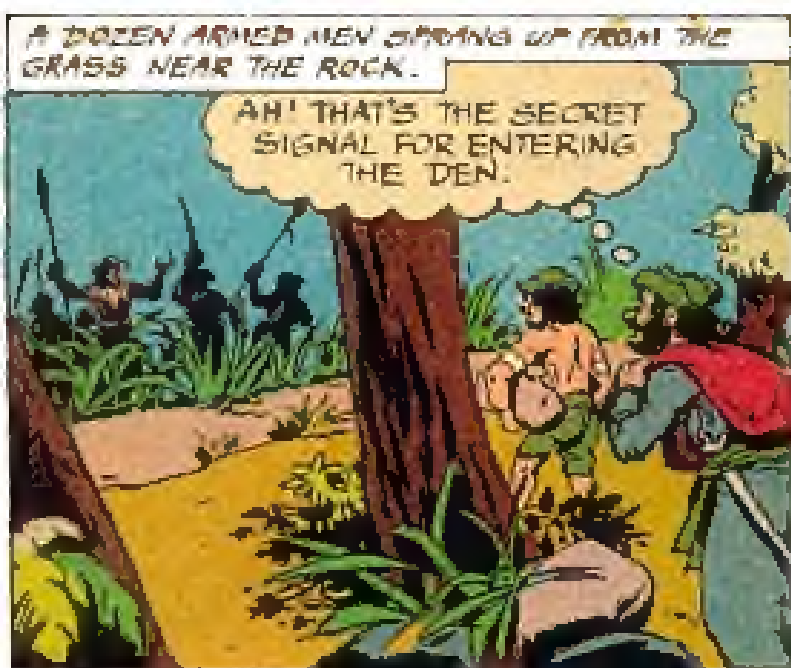
THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM AT WORK.



KING VIRAKETU AND HIS NEW-FOUND COMPANION WORKED HARD FOR HOURS.

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TONIGHT. LET'S GO TO THE FLASHKEN AND WET OUR WHISTLES.

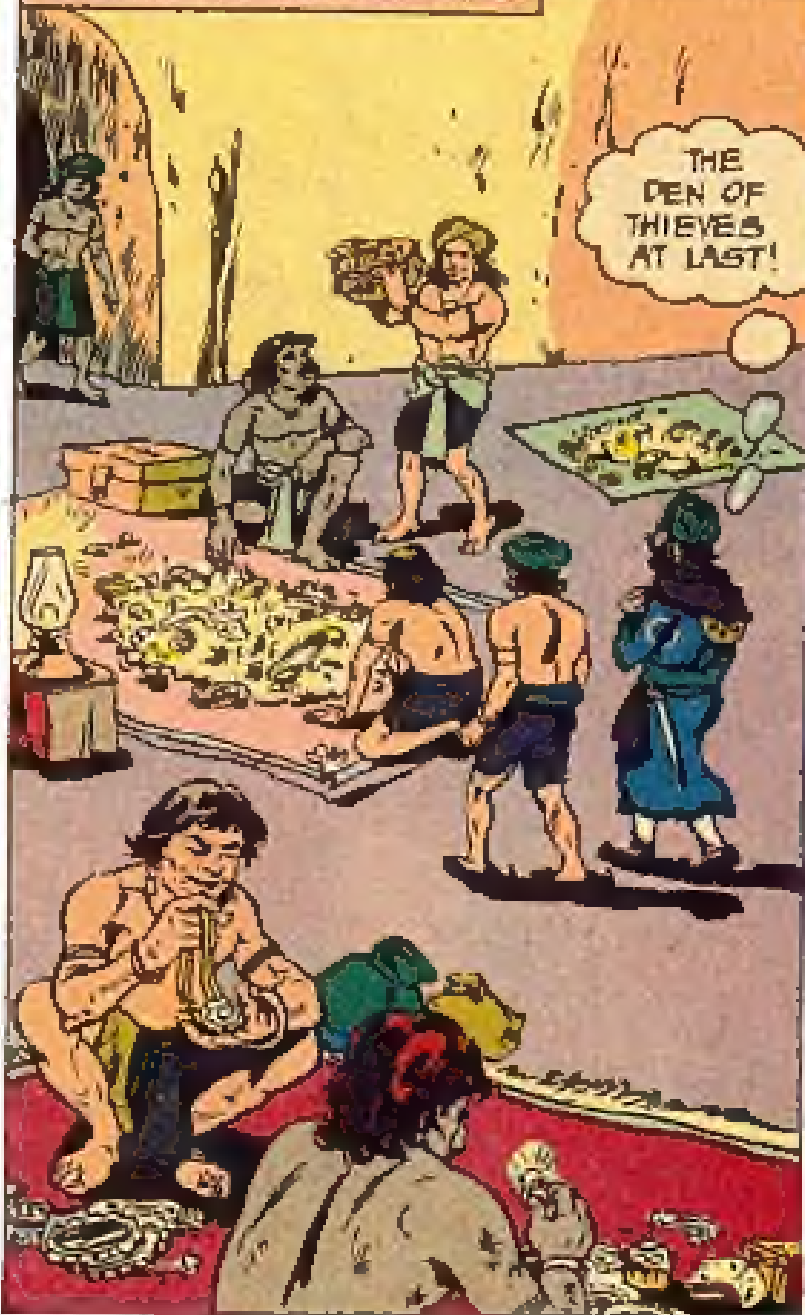




THEY CLIMBED DOWN A BAMBOO LADDER. THE SUDDEN LOUD VOICES AND BRIGHT LIGHT SURPRISED THE KING.



ON THE RICH CARPETS SPREAD ON THE FLOOR WERE HUNDREDS OF WALLETS, BAGS, WEAPONS, GOBLETs AND JARS OF WINE.



THE NEXT ROOM WAS FILLED WITH THUGS AND THIEVES WASHING BLOOD FROM THEIR HAND AND REMOVING THEIR DISGUISE.



THE KING'S COMPANION WAS GREETED LIKE A CHIEF.

HELLO, CHIEF!

HOW WAS THE NIGHT?

HERE IS ANOTHER ADDITION TO OUR GANG.

GOOD!



SOON THE GANG ATE, DRANK AND ONE BY ONE
DROPPED OFF TO SLEEP.



SUDDENLY A MAID SERVANT WHO RECOGNIZED
THE KING CAME FORWARD.

O KING VIRAKETH!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING
HERE? THEY WILL
KILL YOU IF THEY
RECOGNIZE YOU.
RUN AWAY.



THE OLD LADY LED HIM ACROSS THE SLEEPING BODIES TO A SECRET EXIT OF THE CAVE.

I'D BETTER MARK
THIS EXIT
CAREFULLY.



AT DAWN HE WAS BACK IN THE PALACE, AS
SOON AS HE APPEARED IN THE DURBAR—

O KING, YOU PROMISED TO
PROTECT US BUT THE ROBBERY
LAST NIGHT WAS
THE BIGGEST.

JUST GIVE
ME ANOTHER
DAY.



HE SUMMONED HIS GROUP OF EXPERT
ARCHERS.

KEEP READY TONIGHT
FOR A SECRET
MISSION.



WHEN IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT HE LED THEM TO THE THIEVES'DEN

THIS IS THE WAY TO THEIR DEN. WE WILL CAPTURE THEM BEFORE THEY SET OUT FOR ROBBING

MEANWHILE SOON AFTER KING VIRAKETU LEFT THE DEN

HEY, WHERE IS THAT NEW FELLOW?

HE HAS DISAPPEARED

I HEARD THE MAID SERVANT WHISPERING TO HIM. CATCH HER.

I SUSPECT HE WAS A SPY.

ON BEING THREATENED THE OLD LADY CONFESSED

IT WAS K-KING VIRAKETU

WE'D BETTER BE PREPARED.

HE'LL SURELY COME TO CAPTURE US SOON

LET'S RUN AWAY.

NOW IN DAYLIGHT WE'LL SURELY BE CAUGHT

THE CHIEF THOUGHT FOR A WHILE

NO, WE WILL NOT RUN AWAY. WE WILL CONFRONT HIM

YES, CHIEF! WE'LL DO AS YOU SAY

THEY SPENT THE DAY SHARPENING THEIR DAGGERS AND CHECKING THEIR WEAPONS AT NIGHTFALL.

COME, FOLLOW ME.



THE REST OF THE GANG STEALTHILY FOLLOWED THE CHIEF AS HE POSITIONED HIMSELF IN THE WOODS.

THERE THEY
COME!

THEY ARE SO SURE WE'LL
BE IN THE CAVE THAT THEY
ARE WALKING WITH THE
WEAPONS DOWN.



ONE, TWO
THREE, ATTACK!



THE KING'S SOLDIERS WERE CAUGHT BY
SURPRISE.

AHH!



THE BRAVE VIKING TO CONFRONTED HIS
OPPONENT HE DREW HIS SWORD AND
A FLE. ENDED.



THEY FIGHT ON FEET. JUMPED OUTMANEUVERING
EACH OTHER TILL THEY WERE EXHAUSTED



BOTH WERE WELL MATCHED IN SKILL AND
COURAGE AND THE BATTLE SEEMED UNENDING
AT LAST THE KING CLEVERLY DISARMED HIS
OPPONENT



RUN FOR YOUR
LIFE IS OUR CHIEF
IS DEFEATED



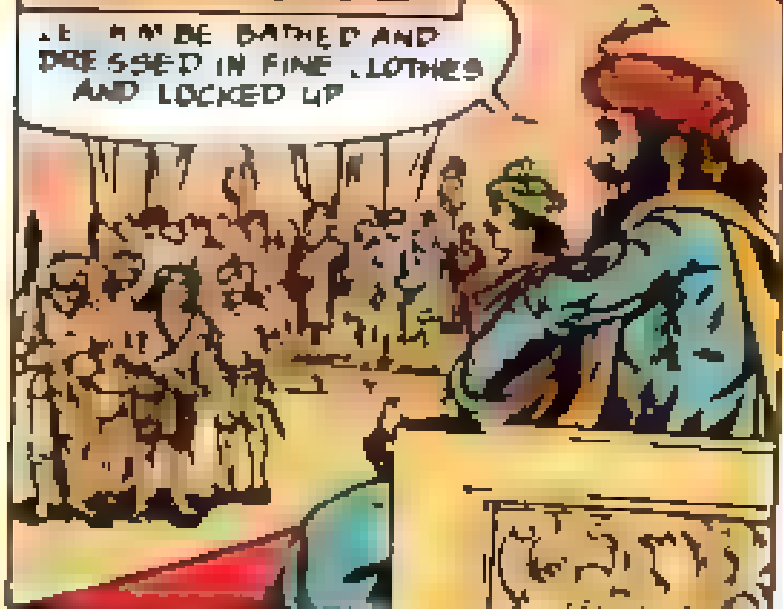
THE KING CALLED FOR THE FEW REMAINING
MEN FROM HIS ARMY

CAPTIVE
HMM!



TO HIS HANDS BEHIND HIM, THE CHIEF WAS
BROUGHT TO THE PALACE

HE WAS BE BATHED AND
DRESSED IN FINE CLOTHES
AND LOCKED UP





GATHER AT THE MA DANA
THIS EVENING AND SEE
HOW HE IS PUNISHED
FOR HIS EVIL DEEDS



THOUGH HE THIEF WAS WOUNDED AND COVERED WITH BLOOD BATHMAN WAS SMILING AT THE

FOR HIM

FATHER! PLEASE
COME HERE!
QUICK



FATHER I
WANT TO MARRY
THAT MAN



HM

YES!

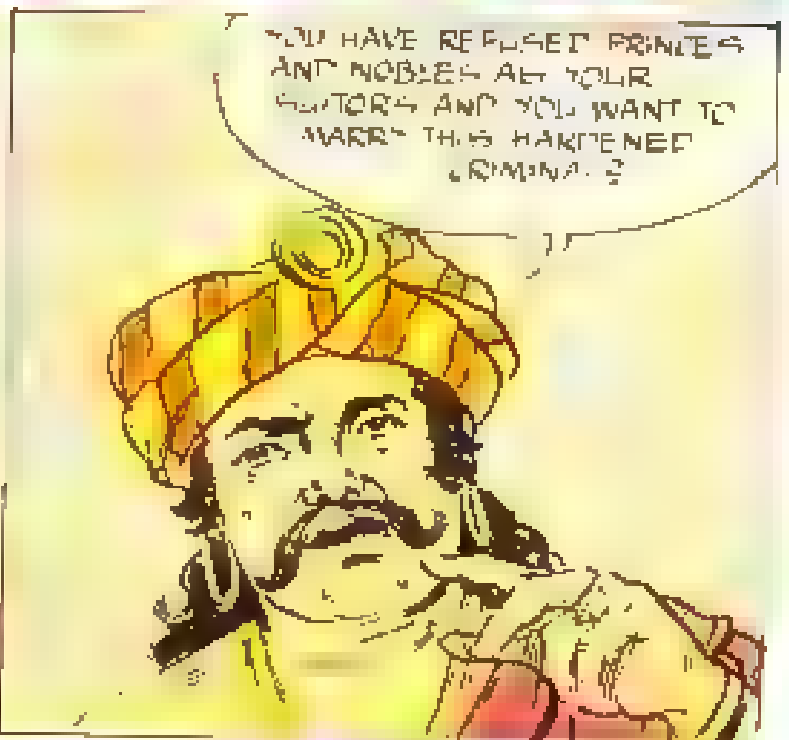


HAVEN'T YOU HEARD
HE'S A BANDIT AND
S TO BE EXECUTED

I DON'T
CARE WHO HE
IS I HAVE CHOSEN
HIM AS MY
HUSBAND



YOU HAVE REFUSED PRINCES
AND NOBLES AS YOUR
GUESTS AND YOU WANT TO
MARRY THIS HARDENED
CRIMINAL?



RATNAVATI WAS DETERMINED.

YOU MUST ARRANGE
TO FREE HIM, FATHER,
OR I'LL KILL MYSELF
TOO

TRY TO
PERSUADE THE
KING



NO I CANNOT FREE HIM
HE HAS BEEN PILLDERING
OUR TOWN. I RISKED MY
OWN LIFE TO CAPTURE
HIM



RATNAVATI WENT TO THE PALACE TO PLEAD
WITH THE KING.

WILL YOU LET HIM GO?
MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE IS AT
STAKE I'M READY TO
PAY WITH ALL MY
WEALTH FOR HIS
FREEDOM.



DISAPPOINTED, RATNAVATI RETURNED HOME

THE KING REFUSED
TO FREE YOUR
CHOSEN MAN.

IF HE DIES, I TOO
WILL GIVE UP
MY LIFE



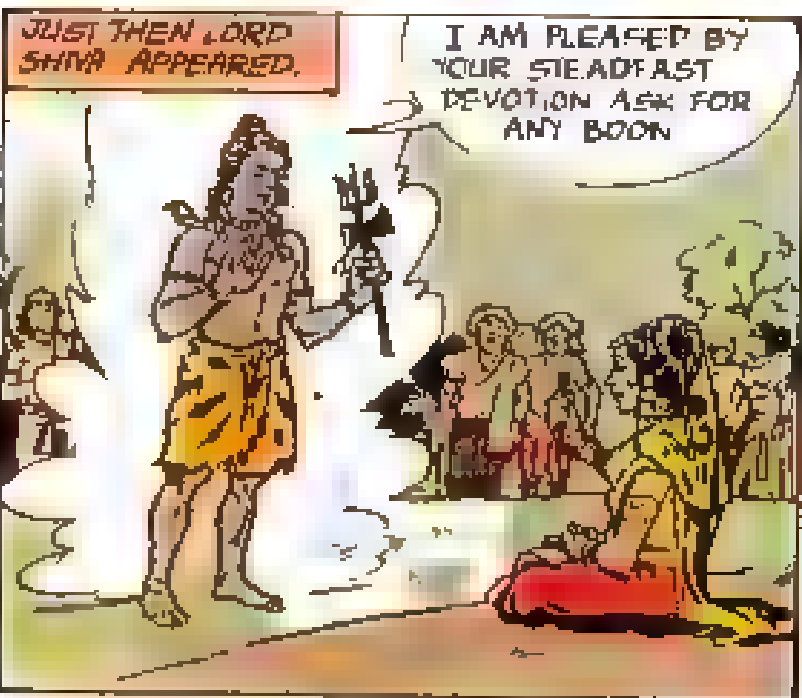
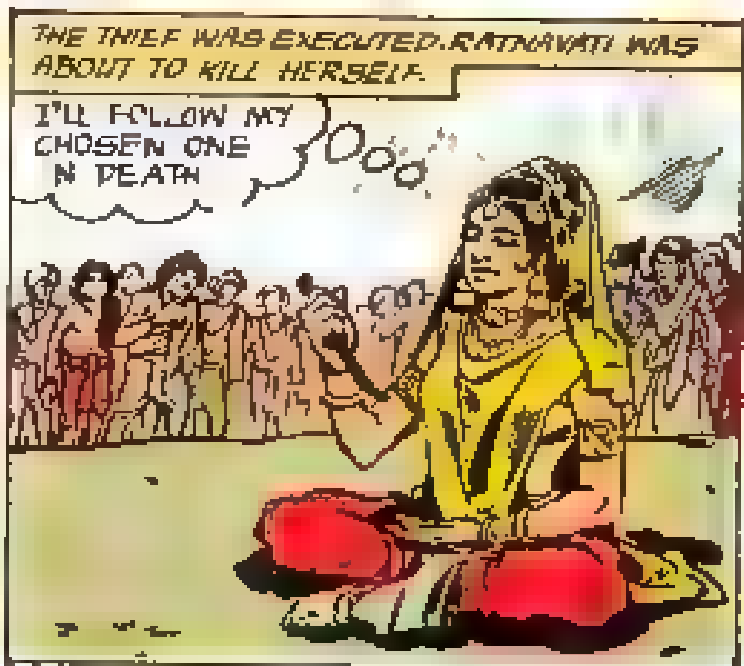
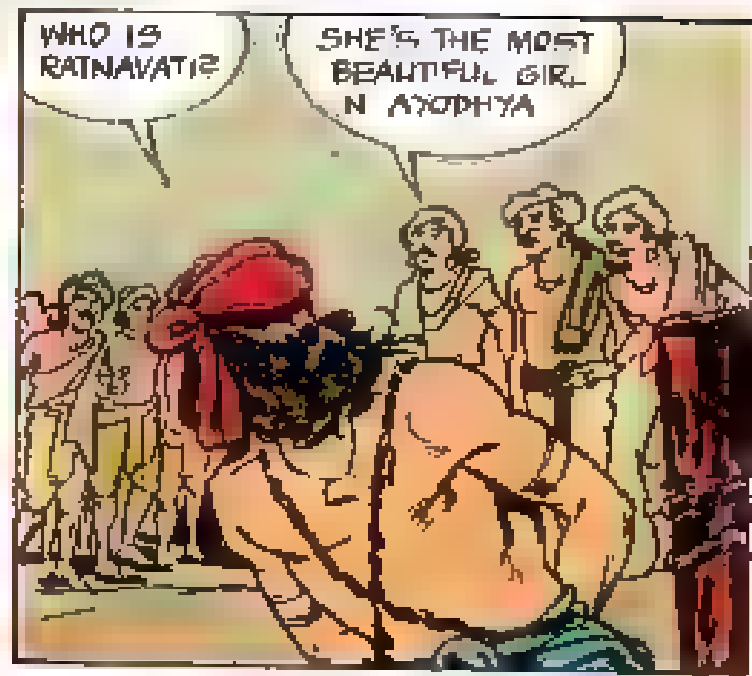
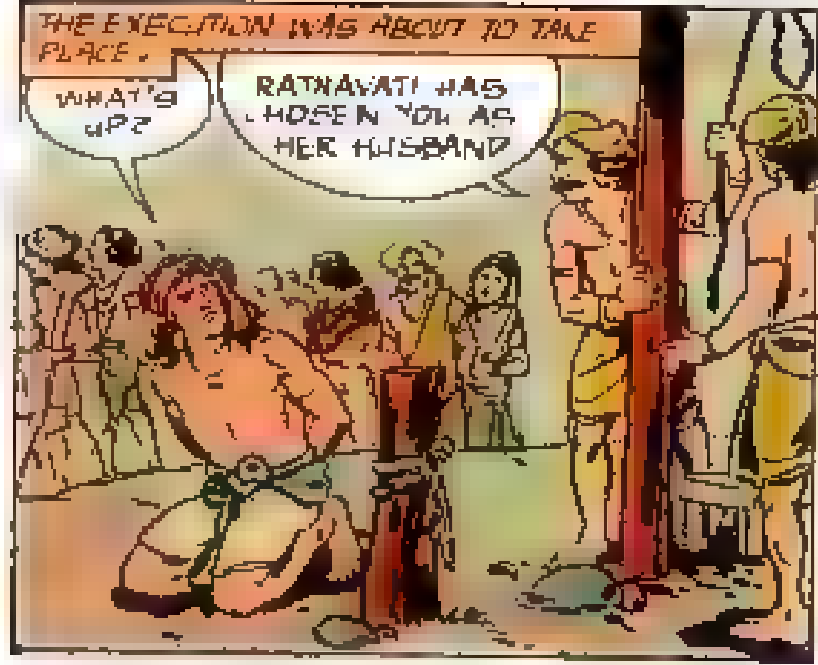
MUCH AS HER PARENTS TRIED TO DISSUADE HER, RATNAVATI DRESSED UP AND WENT TO THE
PUBLIC SQUARE

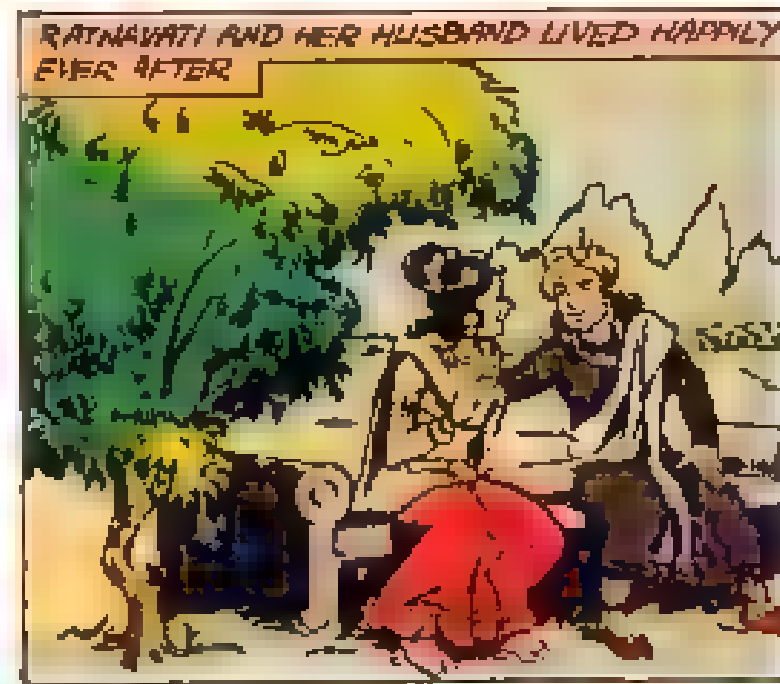
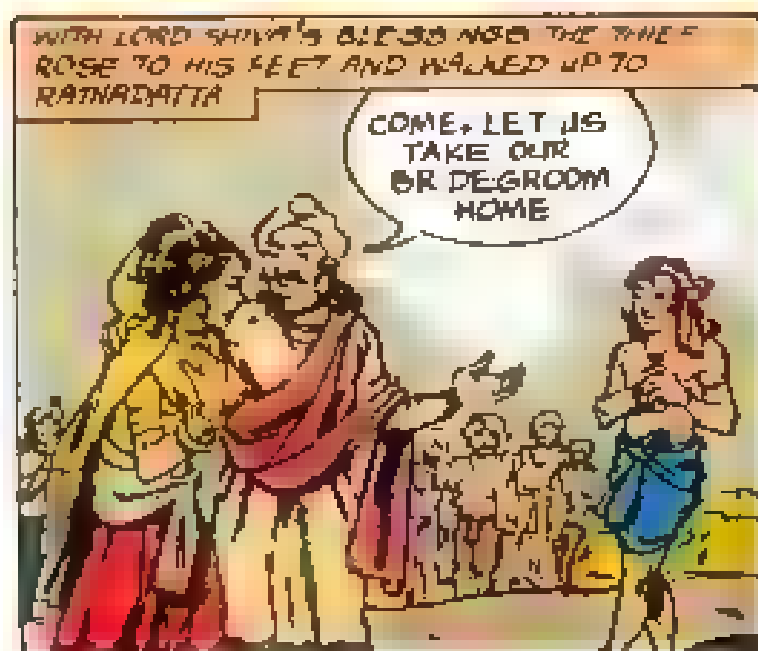
LOOK THERE
SHE IS

SHE WANTS
TO MARRY HE
THIEF

OF ALL
PEOPLE

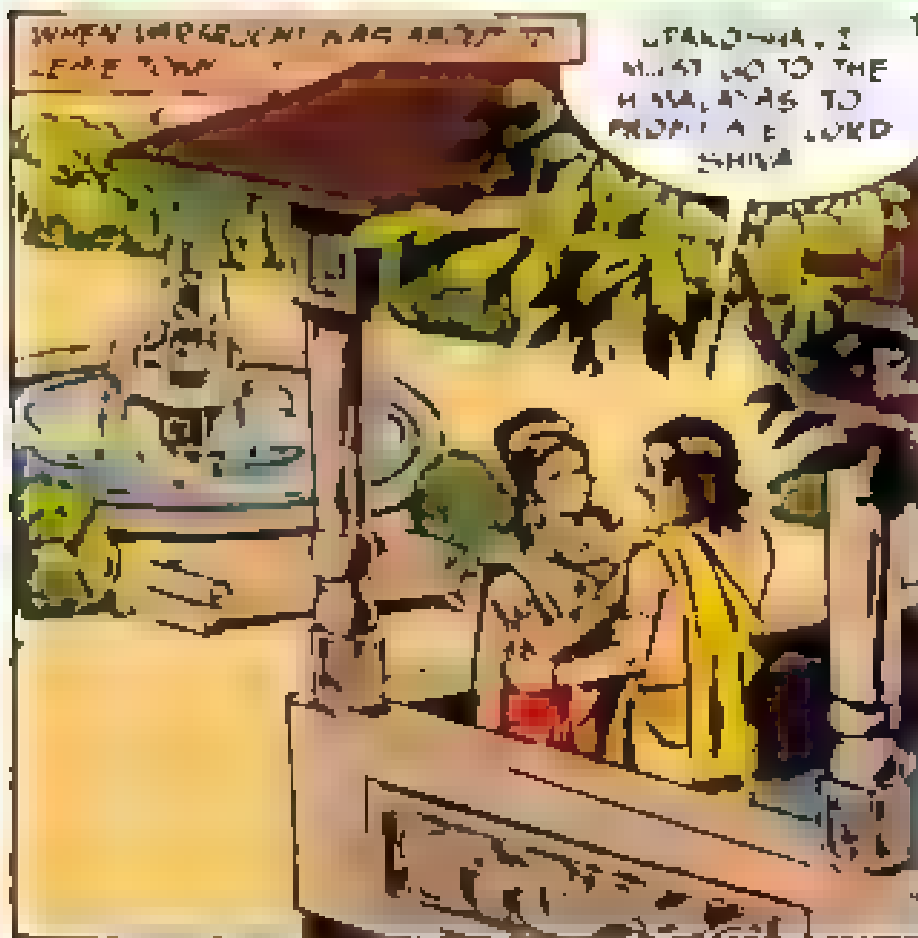
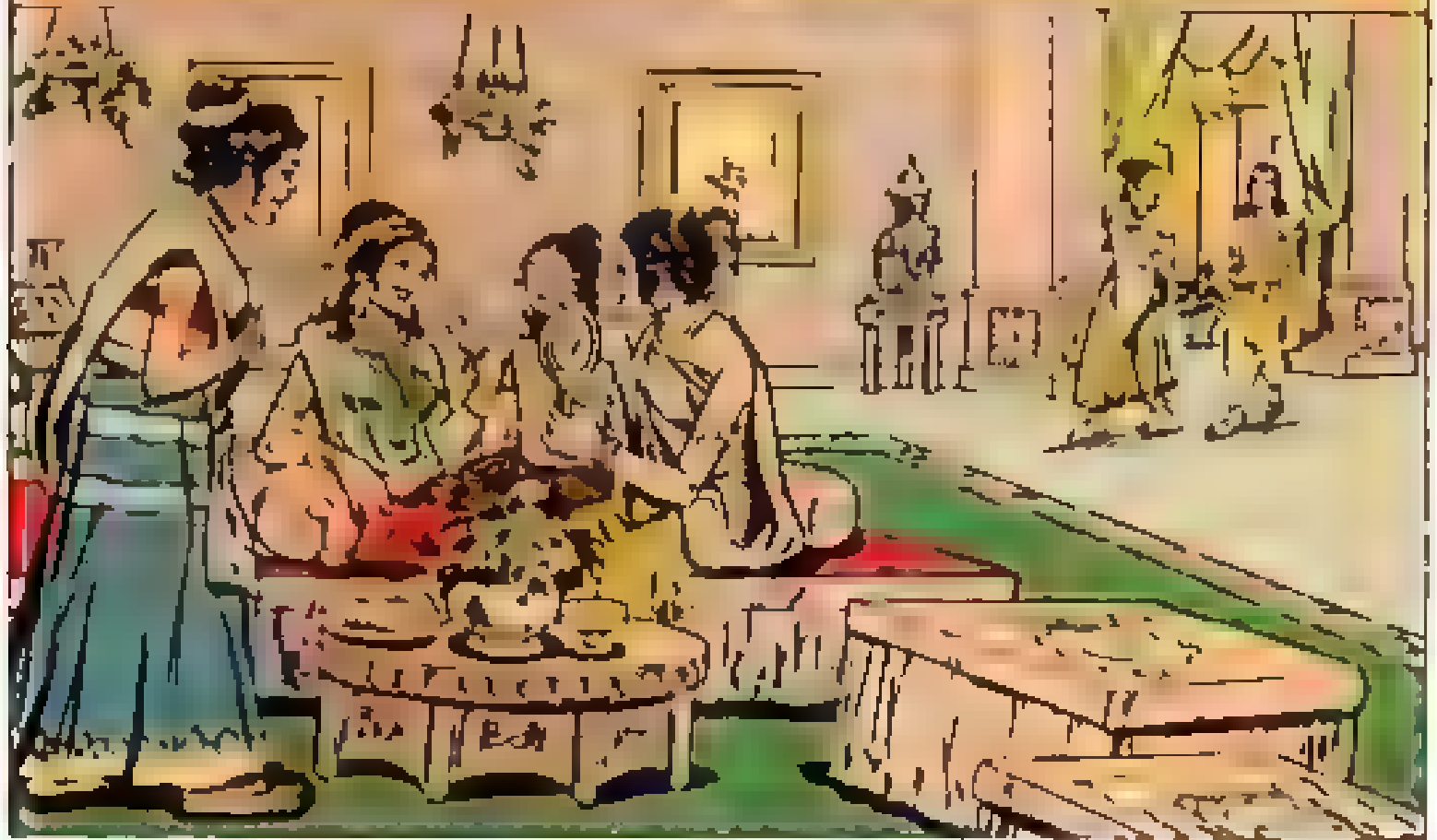






THE GODS AS WITNESSES

THE GODS AS WITNESSES



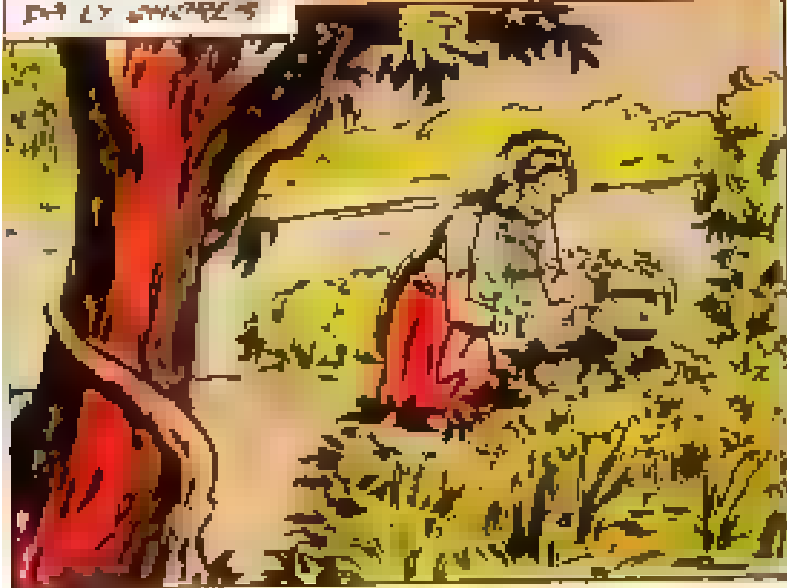
WHEN IMPROVISED HAS BEEN TO
LEAVE THE

STANDS, I
MUST GO TO THE
HALL, AS TO
PROPER A LORD
SHIVA

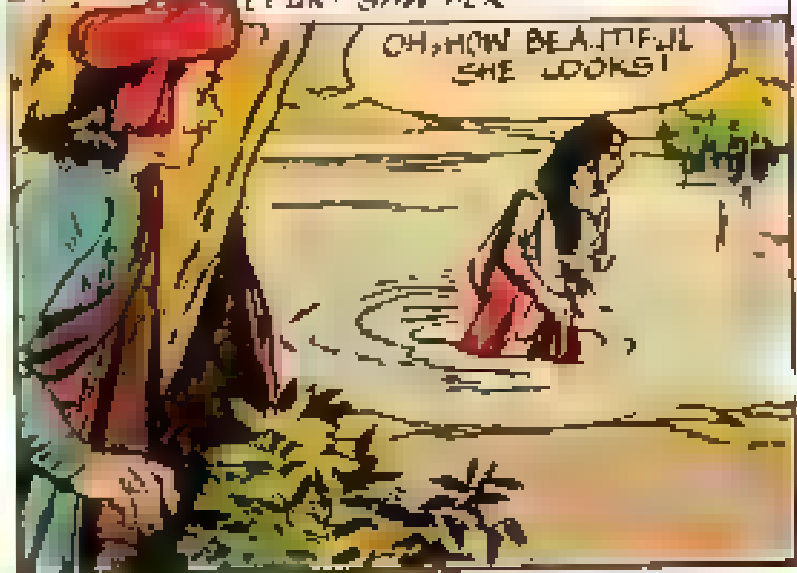
I MAY BE AWAY FOR
LONG GO TO LEFT MY
WIFE IN WITH THE
SHE HAN A KANTHAWA
DO NOT ASK HIM
WHENEVER YOU ARE
IN NEED



AS THE DAYS PASSED, JALISHA GREW THIN AND HAN LISTLESSLY SHE WENT ABOUT HER DAILY CHORES



ONE DAY AS SHE WAS RETURNING HOME AFTER HER EVENING BATH, THE MINISTER AT THE ROYAL COURT SAW HER



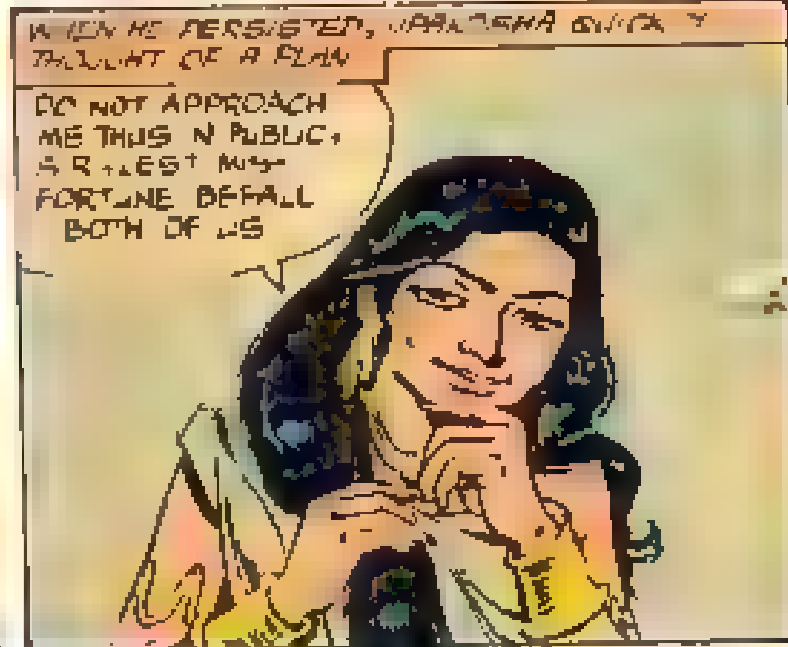
OH, HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE LOOKS!



EMBOLDENED BY HER BEAUTY, HE ADORED HER

MARRY ME, O BEAUTIFUL ONE

BUT I'M BETROTHED TO VARARUCH...

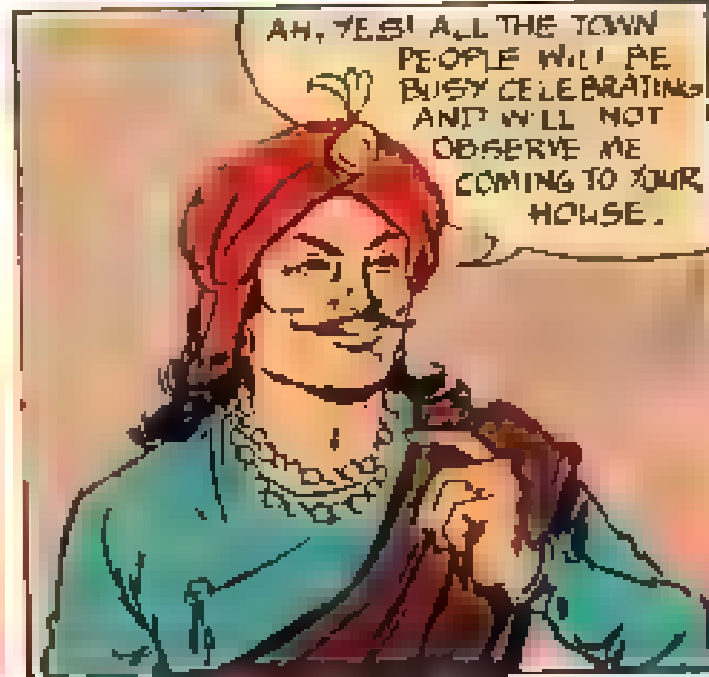


WHEN HE PERSISTED, JALISHA QUICKLY THOUGHT OF A PLAN

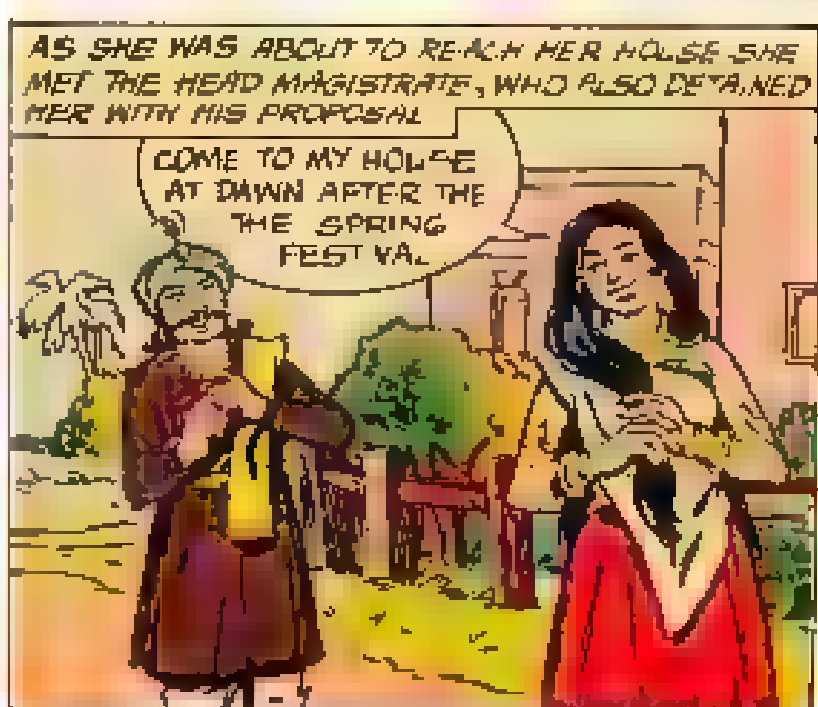
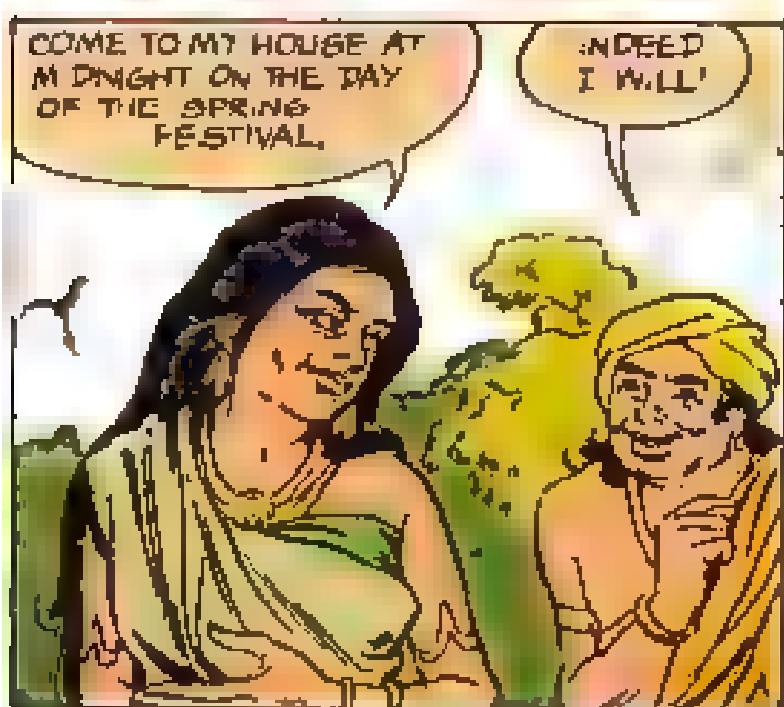
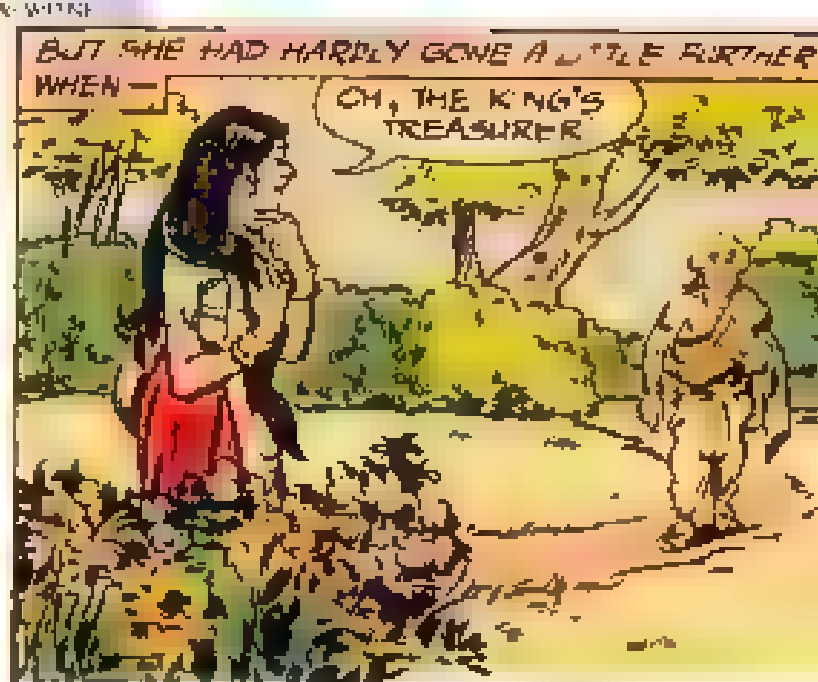
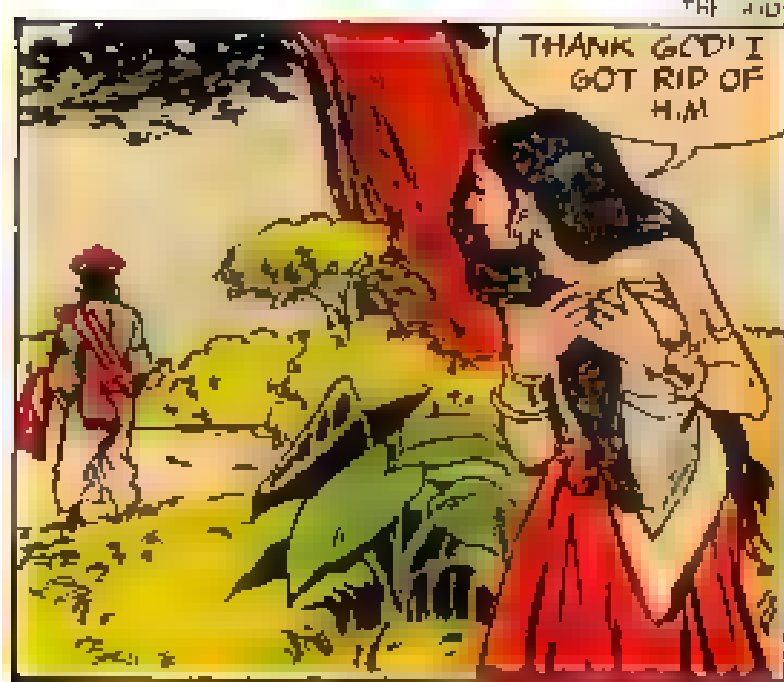
DO NOT APPROACH ME THUS IN PUBLIC, A RILEST MY FORTUNE BEFALL BOTH OF US

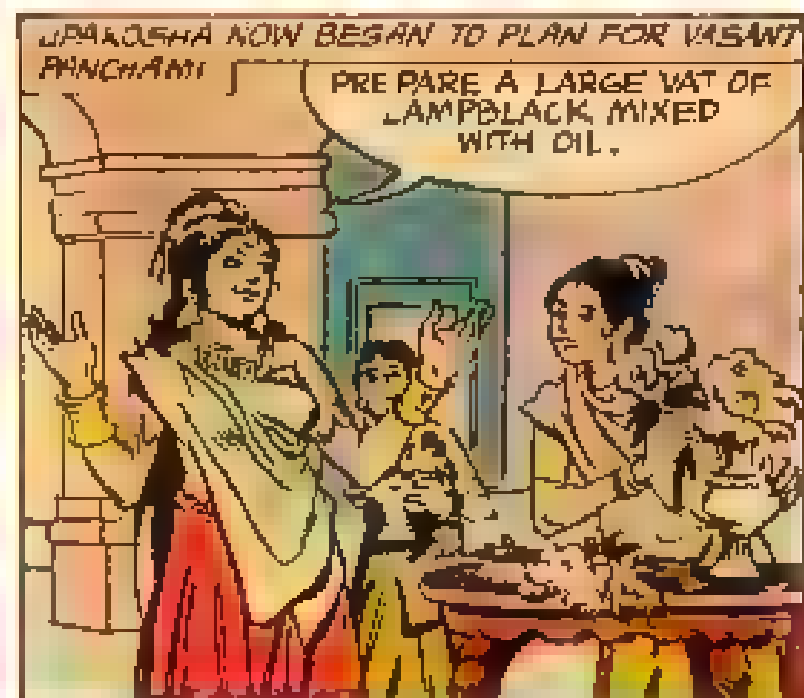
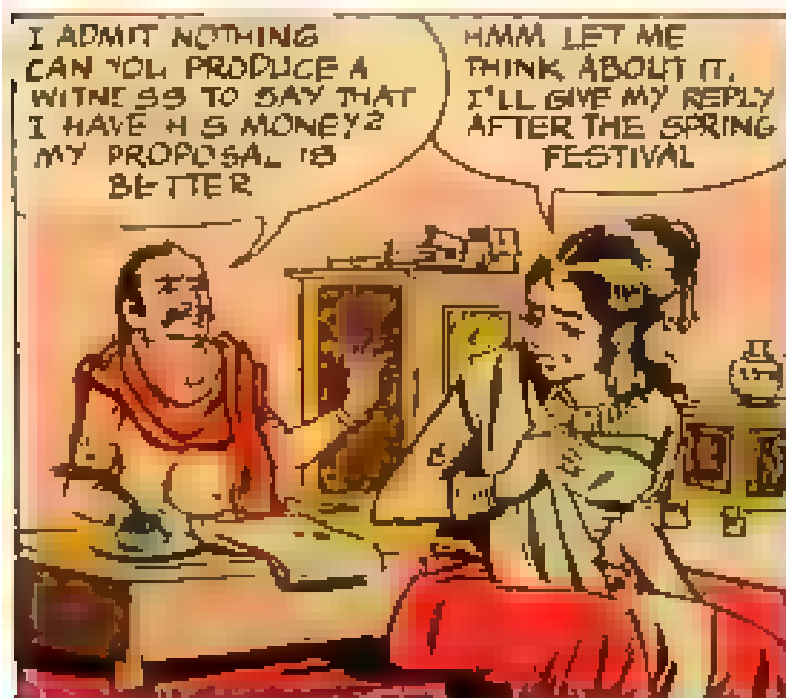
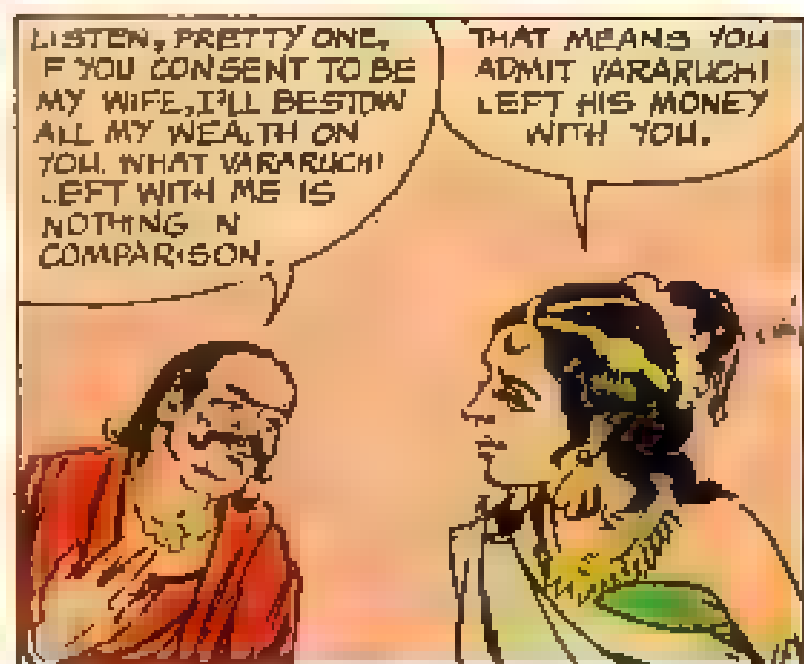
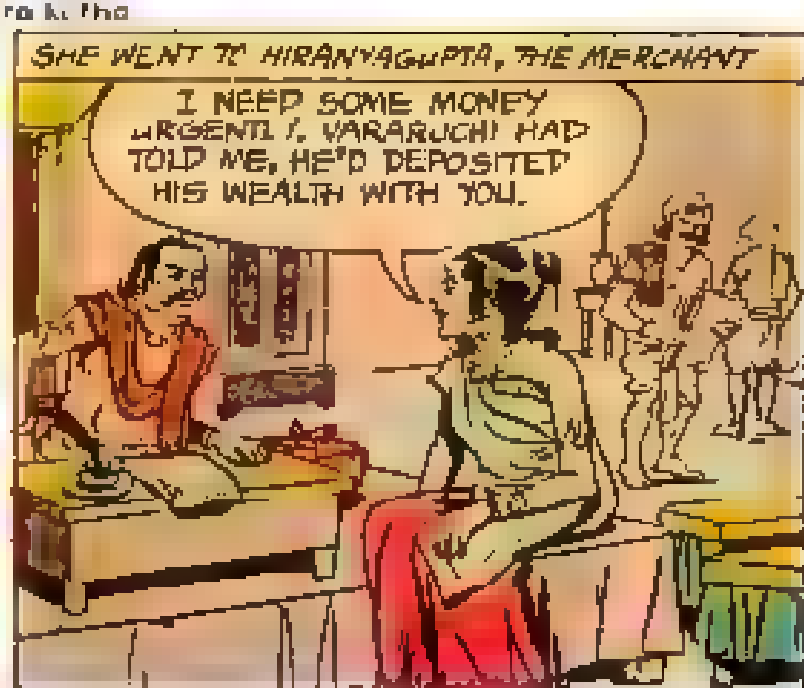


COME TO MY HOUSE AT DUSK ON THE NIGHT OF VASANT PANCHAMI* NEXT WEEK.



AH, YES! ALL THE TOWN PEOPLE WILL BE BUSY CELEBRATING AND WILL NOT OBSERVE ME COMING TO YOUR HOUSE.







NOW ADD THIS MUSK
AND SANDAL TO
PERFUME IT.



HER MAIDS WERE
SURPRISED.

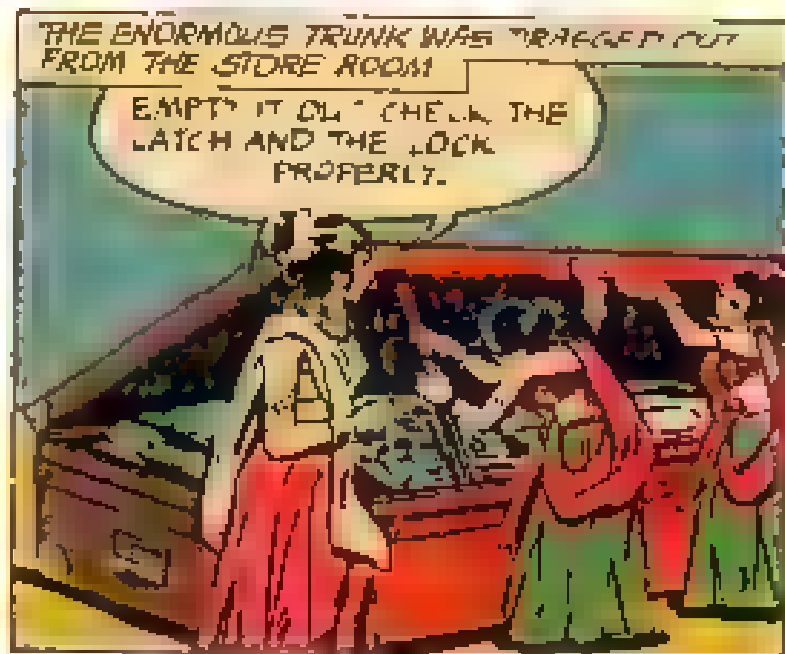
A BLACK
UNGUENT!

YES, KEEP
FOUR PIECES OF
CLOTH DIPPED IN IT FOR
APPLYING IT TO MY
SPECIAL GUESTS.



NOW WHERE'S
THAT HUGE ANCESTRAL
TRUNK?

IN THE
STORE
ROOM



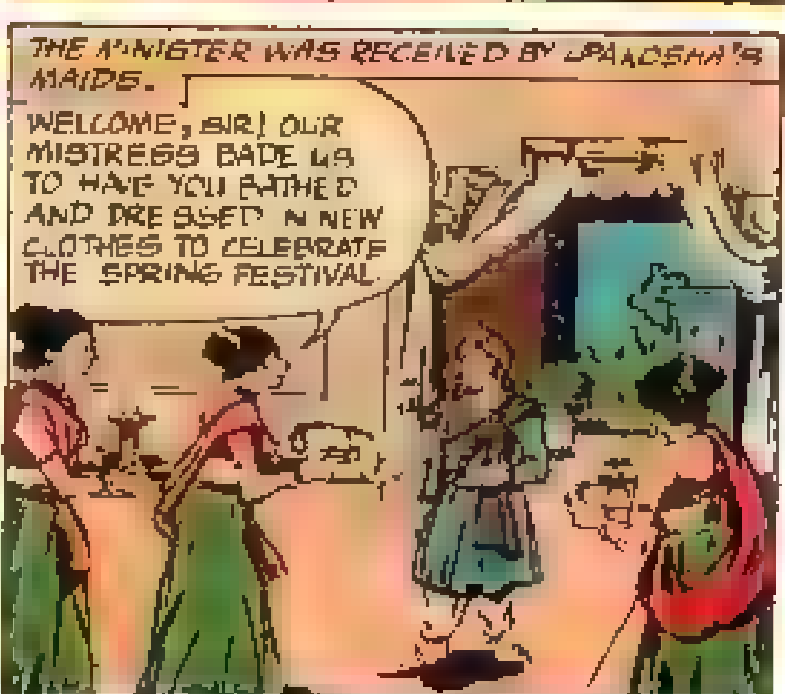
THE ENORMOUS TRUNK WAS DRAGGED OUT
FROM THE STORE ROOM.

EMPTY IT OUT! CHECK THE
LATCH AND THE LOCK
PROPERLY.



UPADESHA CONFIDED HER PLAN TO HER MAIDS
AS DUSK FELL.

THERE HE COMES!
THE MINISTER! DO
AS I'VE TOLD YOU
TO.



THE MINISTER WAS RECEIVED BY UPADESHA'S
MAIDS.

WELCOME, SIR! OUR
MISTRESS BADE US
TO HAVE YOU BATHED
AND DRESSED IN NEW
CLOTHES TO CELEBRATE
THE SPRING FESTIVAL.

ELATED AT BEING THIS WELCOME, THE
MINISTER AGREED HE WAS LED INTO A DIMLY
LIT ROOM

HERE'S A SPECIAL
UNGUENT WE'VE
MADE FOR YOU



THEY TOOK A LONG TIME ANOINTING HIM WITH
THE UNGUENT WHICH HE COULD SMELL BUT NOT
SEE TO SEE THEN



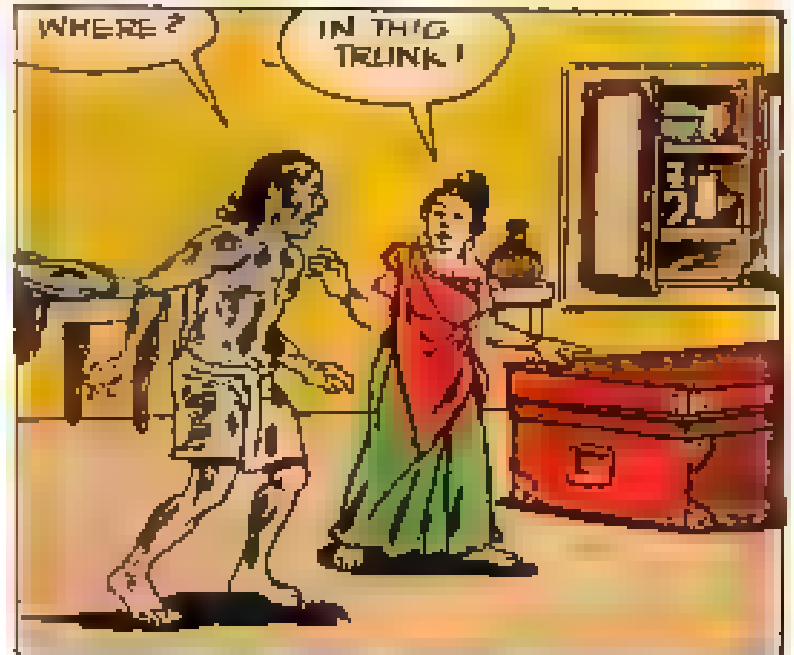
IT IS THE ROYAL
TREASURER

OH HE IS VARARICH'S
FRIEND HIDE!
HIDE



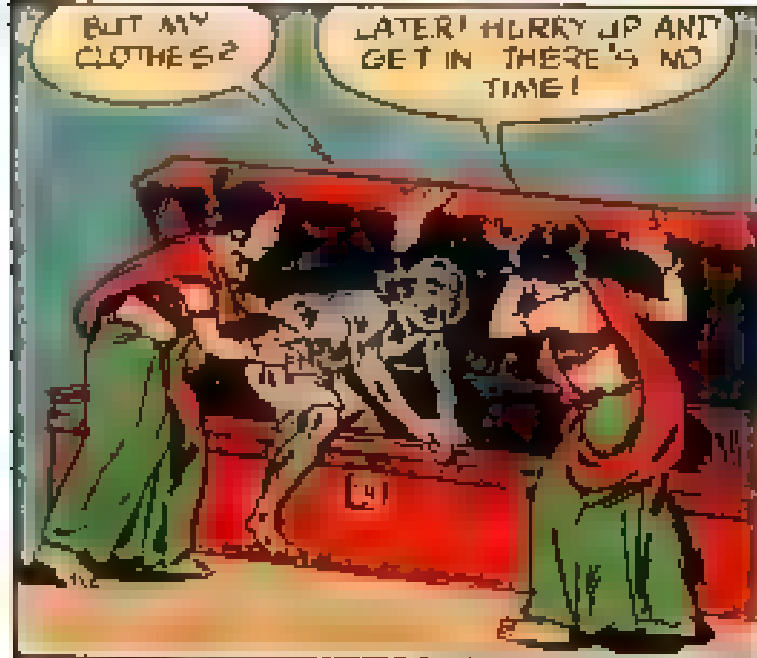
WHERE?

IN THIS
TRUNK!



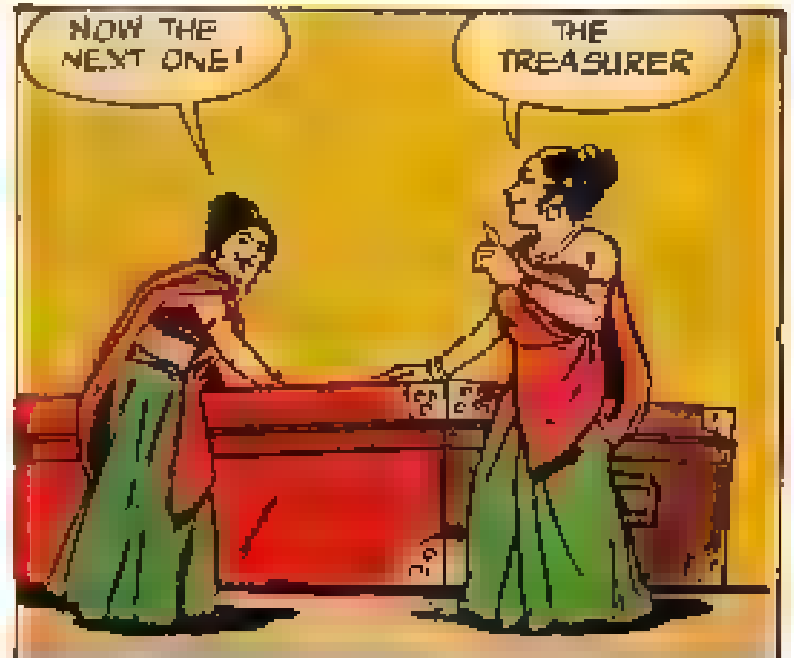
BUT MY
CLOTHES?

LATER! HURRY UP AND
GET IN THERE'S NO
TIME!



NOW THE
NEXT ONE!

THE
TREASURER



THEY BROUGHT THE TREASURER INSIDE THE DIMLY LIT ROOM

OF COURSE YOU MUST BE WEARY FROM YOUR ROYAL DUTIES.

OUR MISTRESS HAS MADE THIS SPECIAL LINIMENT TO GIVE YOU A SOOTHING MASSAGE.



UN SUSPECTING, THE TREASURER SULLY CUMBED TO THE MASSAGE

GOOD! HE'S ALL COVERED WITH LAMPBLACK

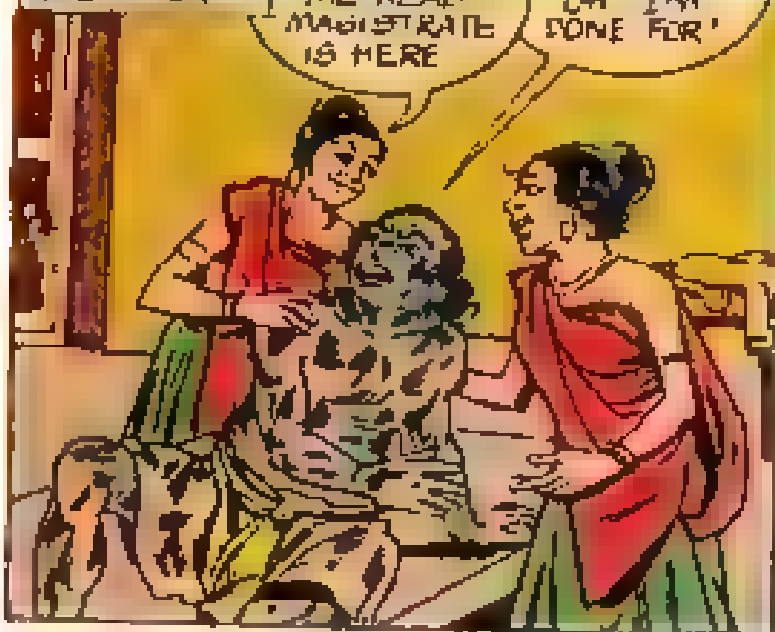
NO ONE WOULD RECOGNISE HIM NOW



JUST THEN—

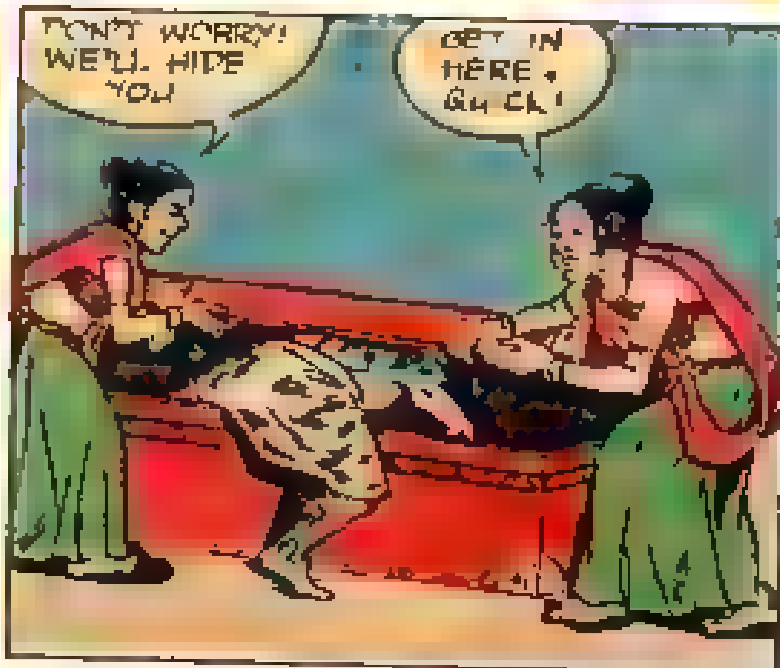
THE HEAD MAGISTRATE IS HERE

OH I'M DONE FOR!



DON'T WORRY! WE'LL HIDE YOU

GET IN HERE, GUCK!



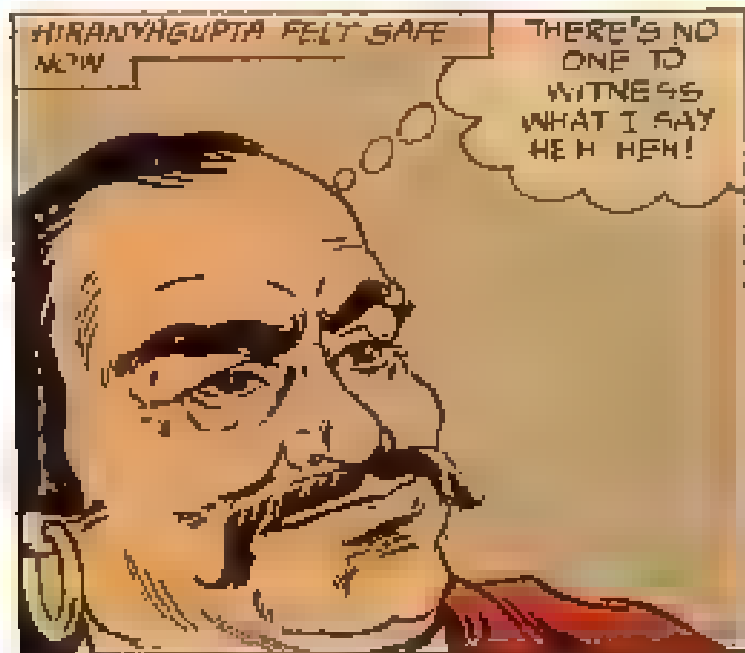
SOON IT WAS THE MAGISTRATE'S TURN TO ENJOY THE DELIGHTFUL MASSAGE



MEANWHILE -

SEND WORD TO HIRANYA GUPTA, THE MERCHANT, THAT I'M READY TO REPLY TO HIM.





UPANDSHA ACCOMPANIED BY HER MAIDS WENT TO THE COURT OF KING NANDA.

YOUR MAJESTY! THE MERCHANT HIRANYAGUPTA IS TRYING TO CHEAT ME



THE NICKED HIRANYAGUPTA PRETENDED IGNORANCE

NO, YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE NOTHING IN MY KEEPING BELONGING TO THIS LADY.



SOON -

IS IT TRUE THAT VARARUCHI LEFT HIS WEALTH WITH YOU TO BE GIVEN TO THIS LADY?

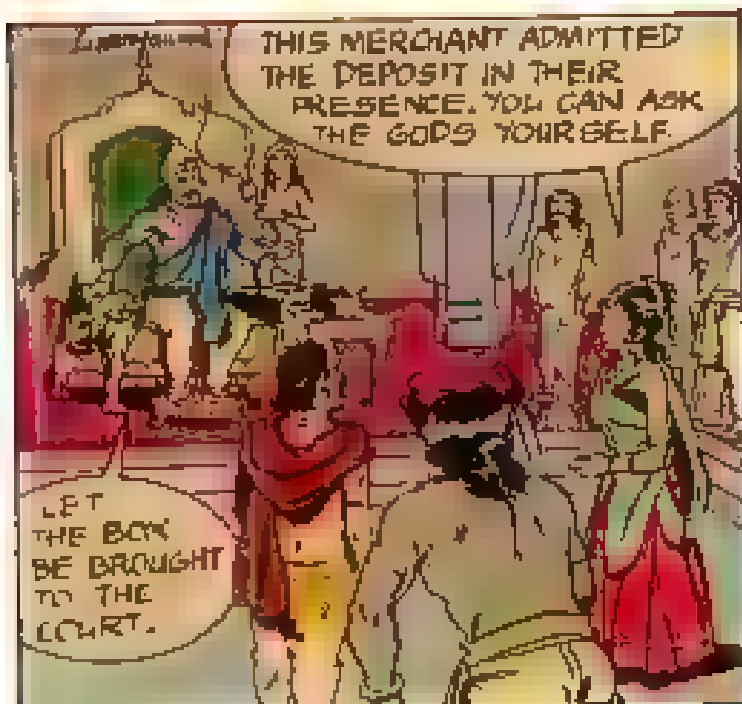


OH! YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE WITNESSES BEFORE HE LEFT, VARARUCHI HAD PUT THE HOUSEHOLD DEITIES IN A BOX



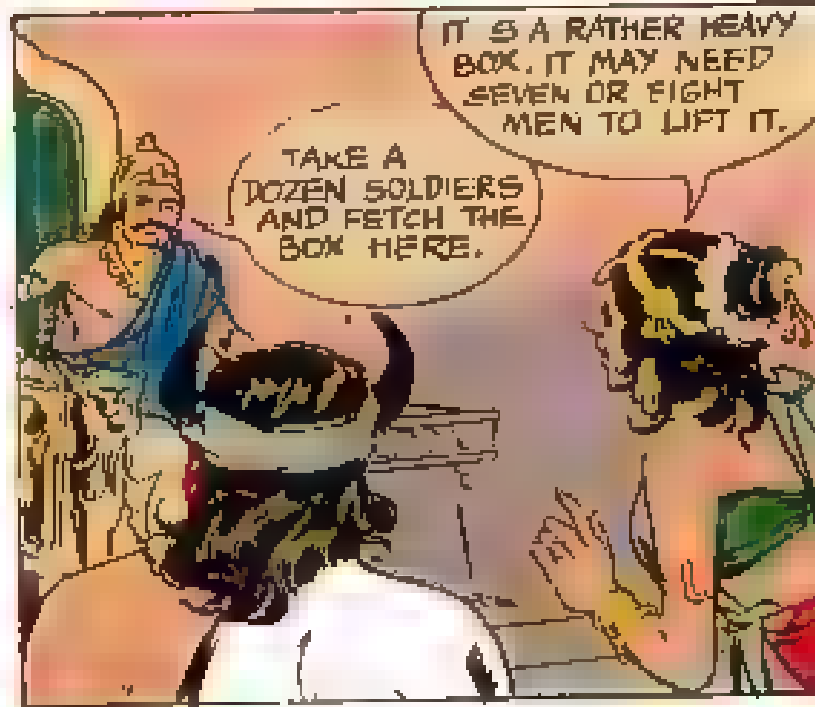
THIS MERCHANT ADMITTED THE DEPOSIT IN THEIR PRESENCE. YOU CAN ASK THE GODS YOURSELF.

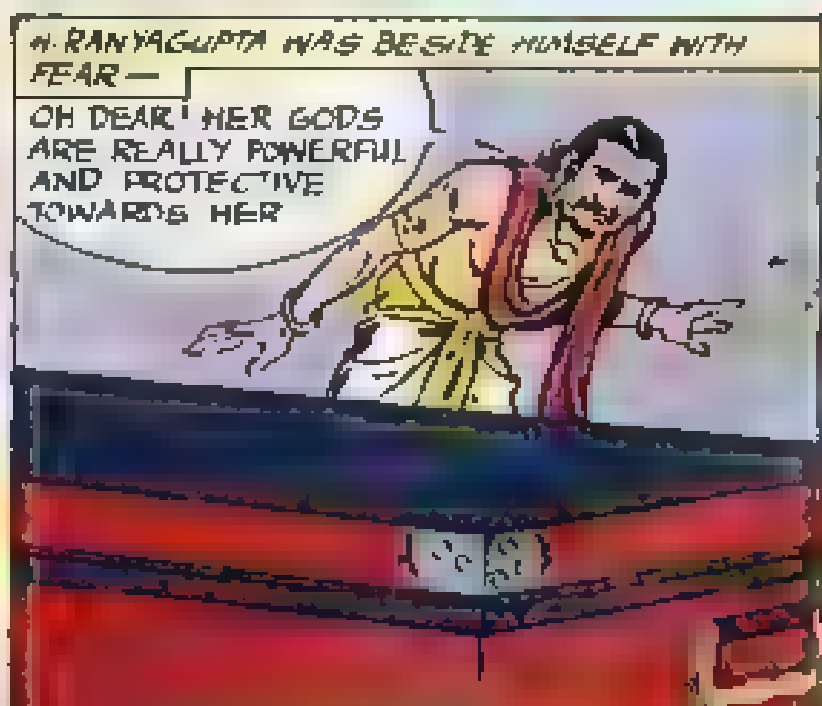
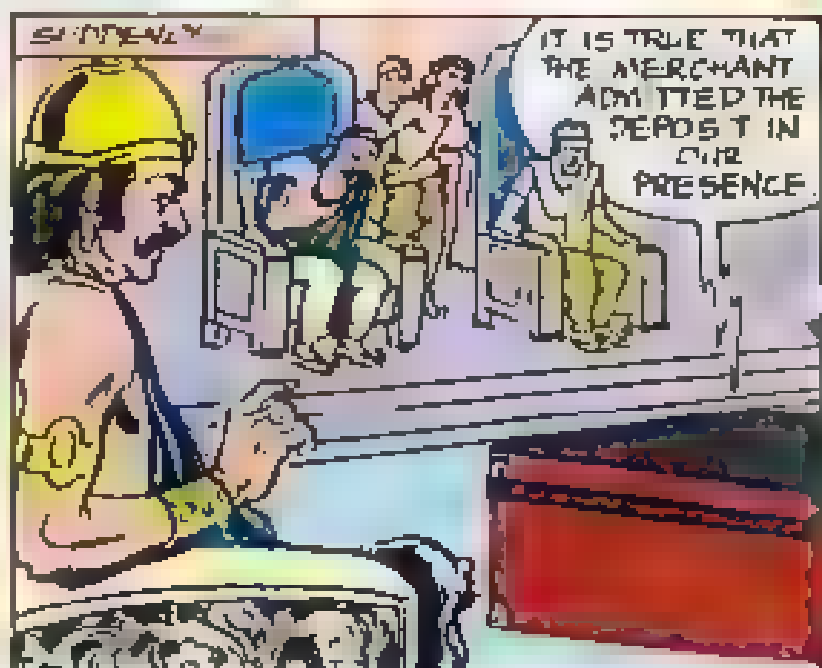
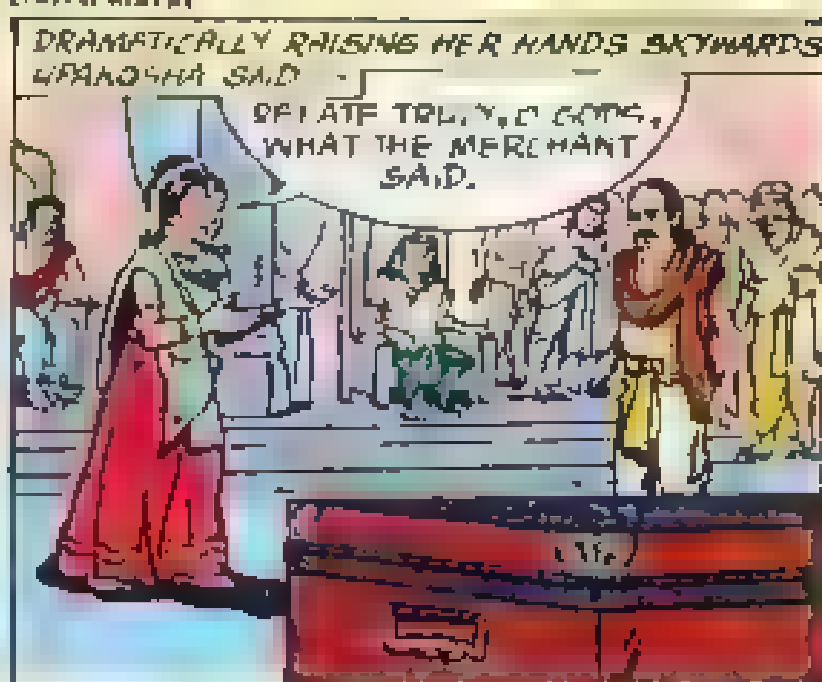
LET THE BOX BE BROUGHT TO THE COURT.

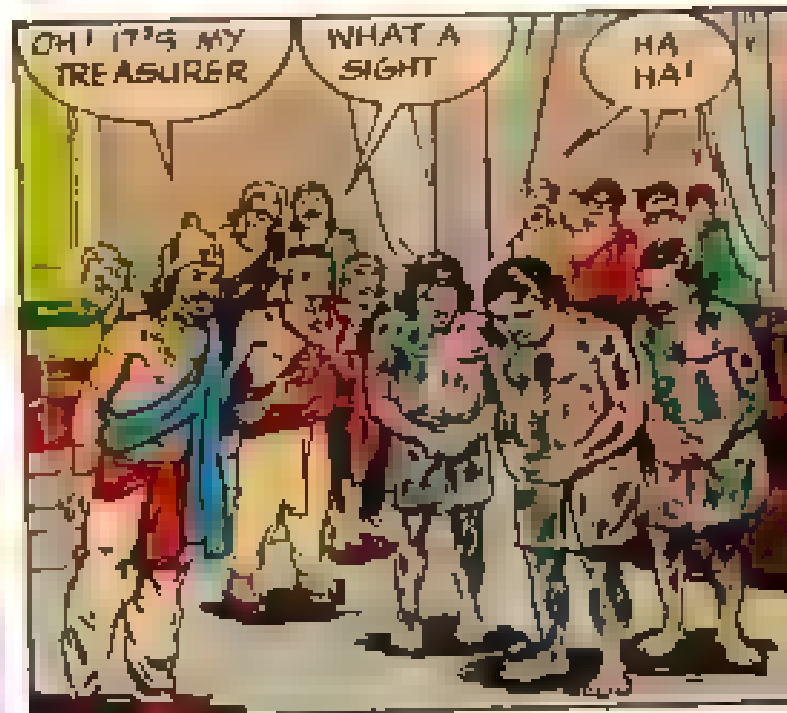
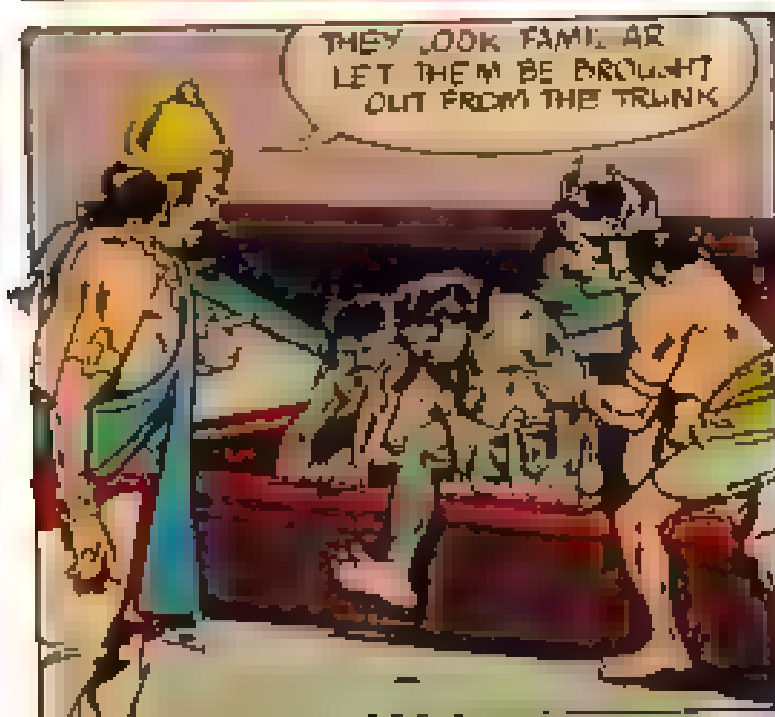
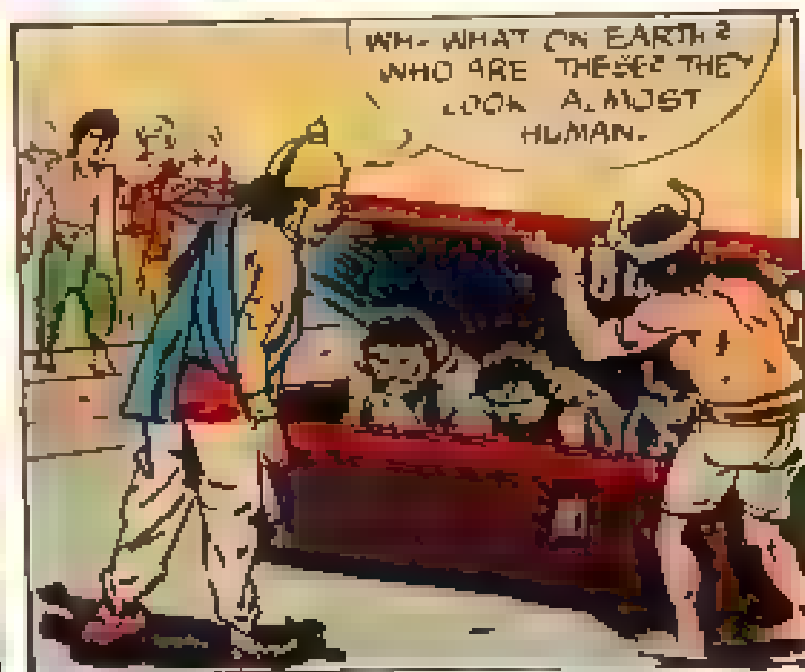
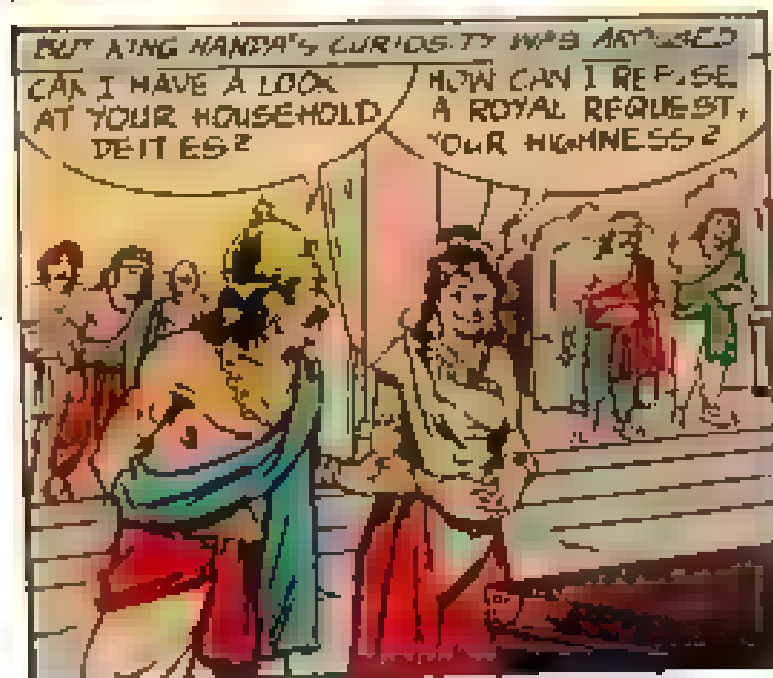


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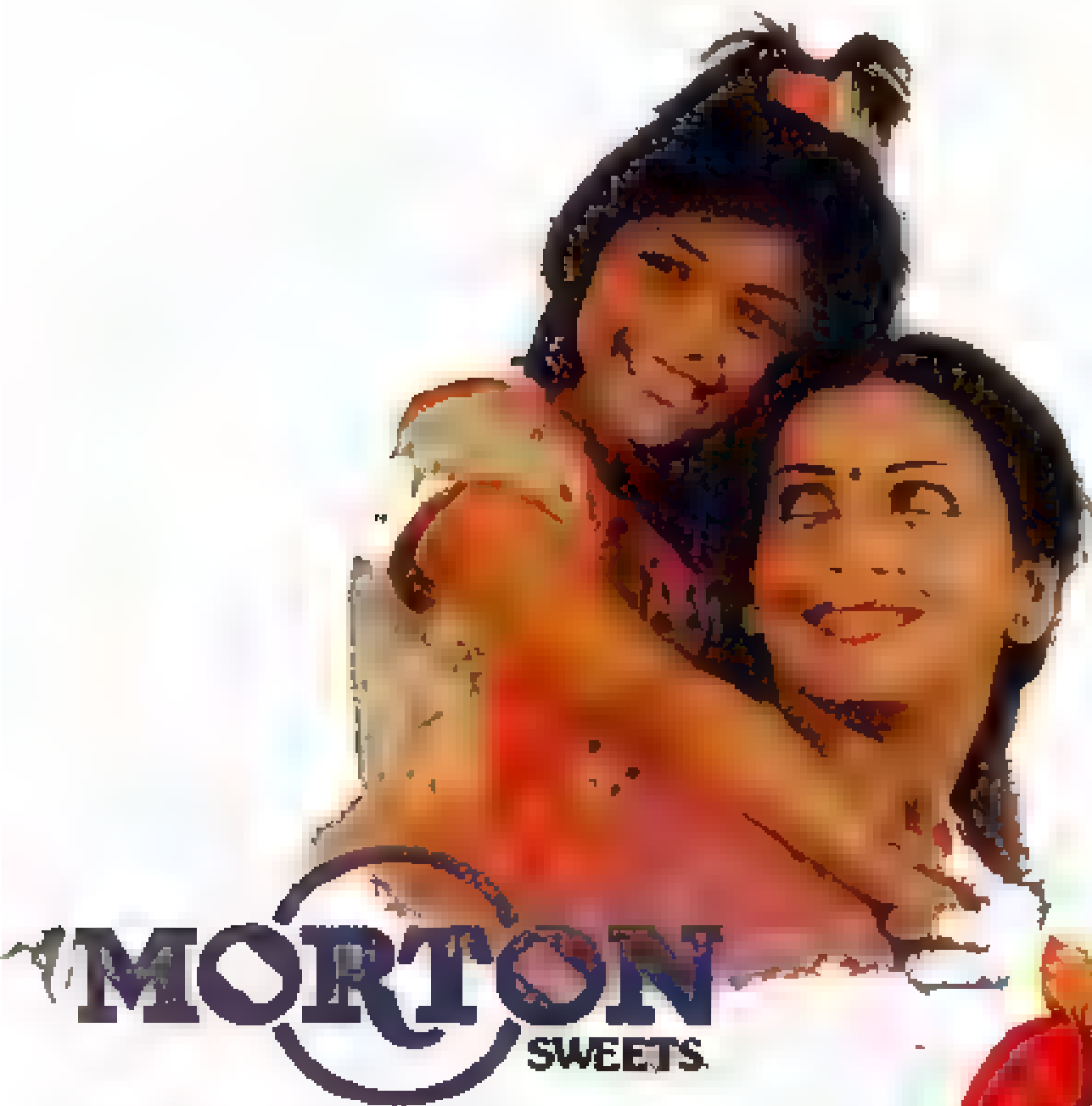
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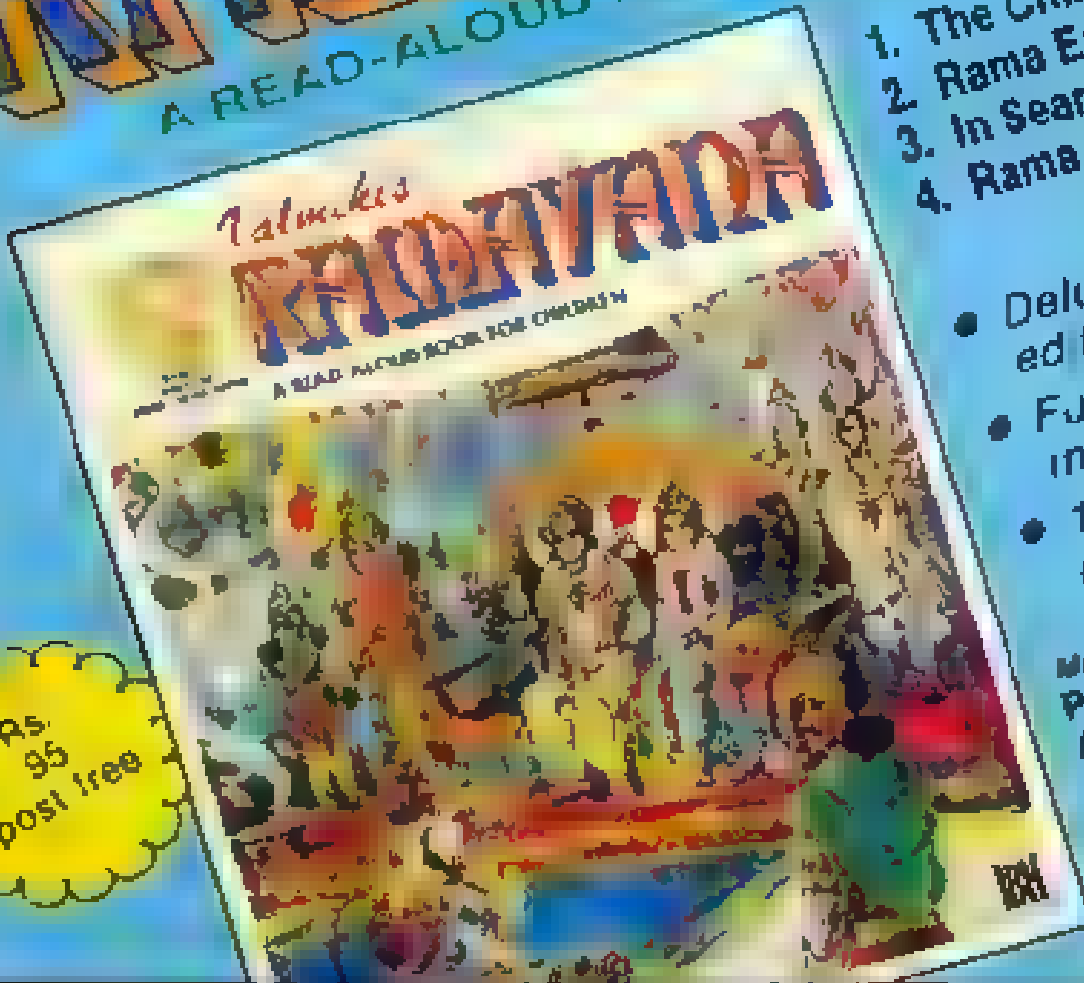
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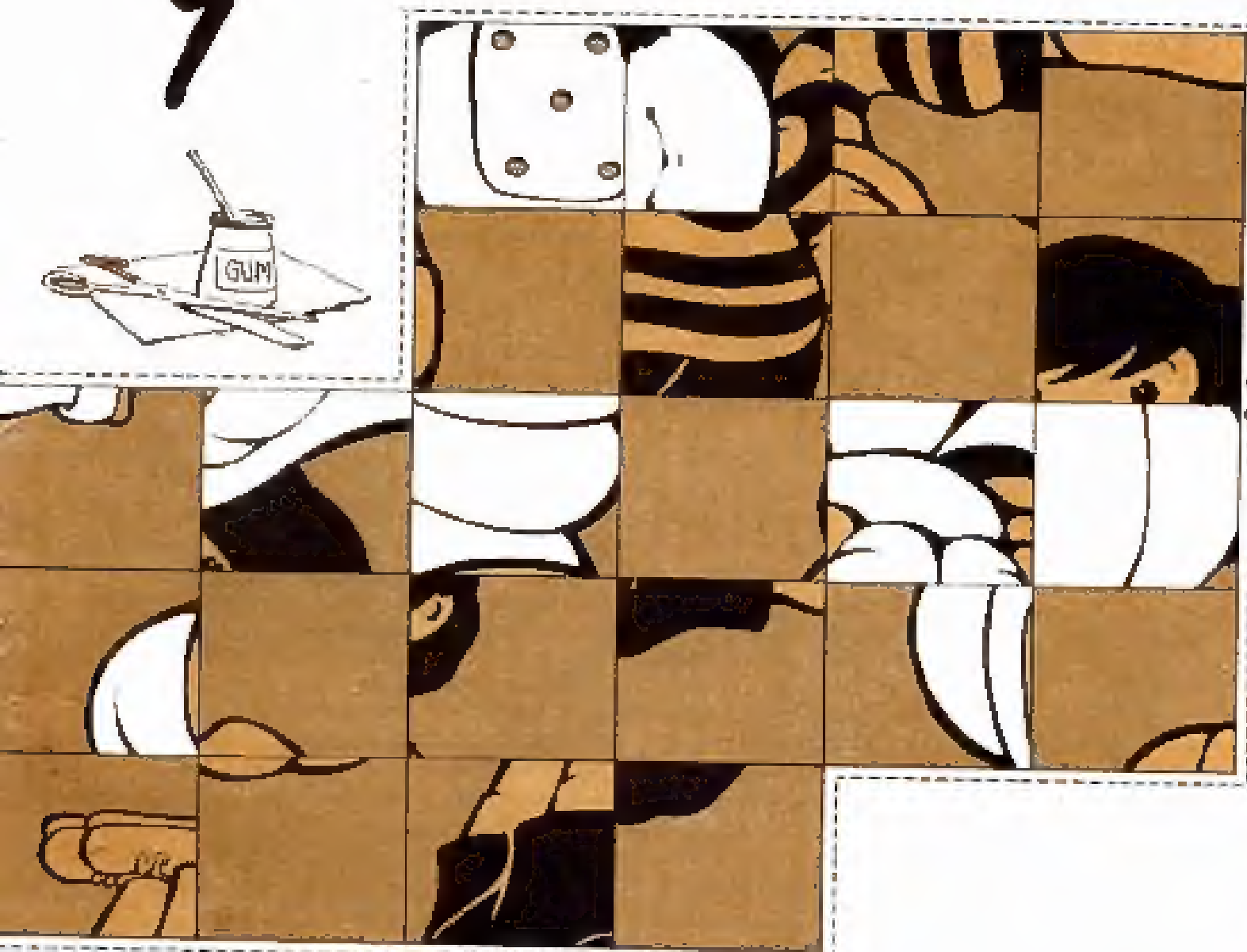
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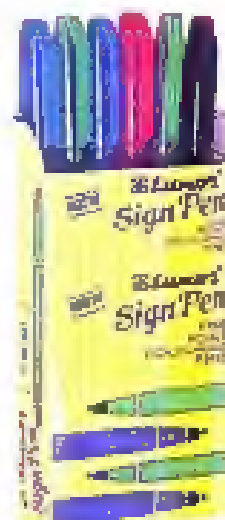
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